YOU
13 MARCH 2022
85
FABULOUS SPRING BUYS
Including the perfect day-to-night bag
'There is a way through pain'
ANNE HATHAWAY
on the vicious trolling that almost broke her

No7

"My beauty has changed over the years, now I just want to show me and my skin"

RITAMARIA | SHE/HER
WEARS SHADE BAMBOO

*Consumer study on 220, whilst wearing the foundation.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

JO ELVIN ★ 13 MARCH 2022

Pampered pet? Mine's a four-legged empress

I was shaking my head and tutting at the lengths some people will go to for their beloved pets in our feature on page 29. Spending £100 on a dog collar or a designer piece of animal clothing? I think that's outrageous. But the pet boom launched by lockdowns has now led to a multimillion-pound pampering business aimed at people who think it's normal to buy a £12,000 'dog settee'. Crazy, right?

My dog Bella is loved but not spoilt. No, not at all. OK, so she has two dog beds in our lounge. But I'm sure you understand, one never knows if she'll be in the mood for firm or feathery support during an arduous eight-hour day nap. Sleeping under the covers of your humans' bed all night is quite tiring. She also likes the chaise longue in the dining room, but only when the sun isn't hitting the kitchen couch in quite the right way. She, of course, loves to snuggle up with me on the living room sofa, but only if I've plumped a big enough 'cushion mountain', and on the condition that I don't stop the neck scratching for a second. Helpful, constant bats with her paw keep me productive.

Unlike overly pampered pets, she doesn't take her food for granted. In fact, she is very principled about 'earning' her (endless) doggie snacks. So she won't eat them without 'fighting' them, which is never not hilarious to watch. But it does mean we are on call 24/7 for the sport where she drops them at our feet like a ball, barks like crazy while we perform the pantomime of withholding them, before throwing them across the room. This process may well be repeated up to ten times per snack, depending on Bella's mood, or if a new human enters the room to be cajoled into the whole charade again.

When we're in the park for one of her three walks a day, if I accidentally set off on a route that Bella has decided against, she will helpfully stop, root herself to the spot and just glare at me, completely immobile, until I come to my senses and start walking in whichever direction she has deemed correct.

Bella is very loving and frets – a lot – if she's left on her own, so that's the only reason we pay a babysitter to watch TV with her if ever we're all out. I really have to stop rolling my eyes at Liz Jones's obsession with her dogs, don't I? It's not so much that I live with a pet, but rather I have a four-legged empress with several servants running around after her: me, my husband, our daughter and the most loyal dog walker in the world, Judith. I've even nicknamed myself Bella's personal 'bum butler', which is already more detail than you'd probably like.

Our feature explores the beauty treatments for dogs that became a booming business during the pandemic. But it was long before Covid when Bella came back from the salon smelling delightfully of her 'blueberry facial'. What can I say? She's worth it. And I'm betting that the many pet lovers among you are just as devoted (pathetic?) as me!

Enjoy the issue.

@jo_elvin
@jo_elvin
editor@you.co.uk

EDITOR'S PICKS

A few things I'm coveting this week

1. Flattering shape. 2. Gorgeous colour. 3. Sold!
Trousers, £90, boden.co.uk

Love the juxtaposition of pretty pearl on a tough chunky shoe
Shoes, £155, camillaelphick.com

Happy spring clothes, it's your time to shine
Jumper, £195, chintiandparker.com

Big on
hot crossed,
Great British bloomin,
Fairtrade chocolat-ing, springtime
quality for all
LIDL
Retail Industry awards 2021
SUPERMARKET OF THE YEAR
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YOU WILL LOVE...

...FASHION STYLIST JOANNE TOOLAN'S LITTLE PICK-ME-UPS

Guaranteed to make you smile
Jumper, £59.95, joules.com

Pretty... and personal
Initial necklace, £65, pdpaola.com

Anyone for a fruity cocktail?
Gin liqueur, £22, isleofbarradistillers.com

A pop of pastel for your pocket
Purse, £185, aspinaloflondon.com

Make a subtle statement
Ring, £125, edgeofember.com

Is it bedtime yet?
Pyjamas, £59, hush-uk.com

Comfy, fluffy – and all yours
Dressing gown, £35, marksandspencer.com

We love the colour, the print, the retro style...
Jumpsuit, £129, whistles.com

All things sweet... we heart
Hamper, £60, cartwrightandbutler.co.uk

For a cute ankle flash...
Socks, £8, whitestuff.com

Our kind of wallflowers
Print, £85, sezane.com

Bling to make your heart sing
Earrings, £135, katespade.co.uk

OUR BEAUTY DIRECTOR MEETS A HAIRCARE LEGEND

The man with the golden touch

The A-listers' favourite colourist shares his tips

It isn't often that I rave about a hair product, but **DP Hue ACV Apple Cider Vinegar Hair Rinse** (£32) is an exception. It's a shampoo replacement, so it cleans hair but doesn't strip or dehydrate it, maintaining the pH balance of the scalp, adding shine and, perhaps most importantly, reviving colour.

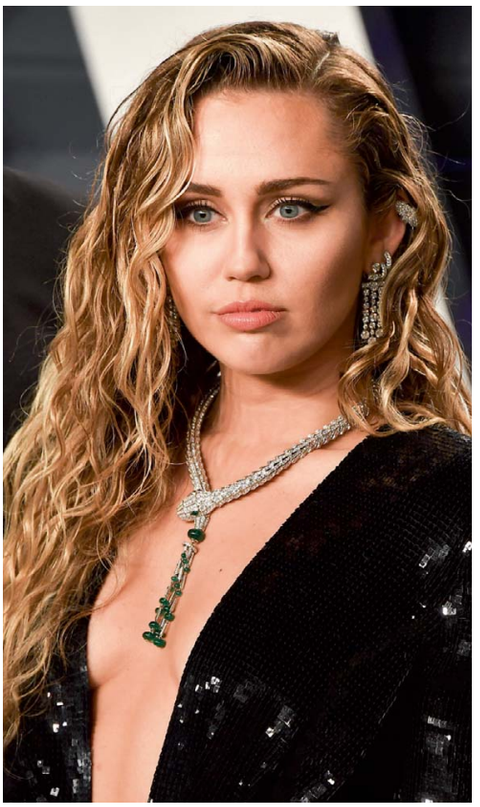
Why focus on the colour aspect? Well, not simply because it works but because this is the brainchild of Justin Anderson, the hair colour king of LA and the man behind many of the most iconic shades of blonde *de nos jours*. For the past ten years, he's been the one responsible for Jennifer Aniston's perfect blend of natural-looking blondeness ('she is the kindest, warmest, nicest person'). His are the hands that carefully curate Gwyneth Paltrow's sunny Californian locks. He also flew out to tend to Miley Cyrus's tresses every two weeks during her Bangerz world tour. And he's the chap who can take Margot Robbie from blonde to bronde and back again as film roles or life requires.

Sadly, for the rest of us, this dedication to his celebrity clientele and his haircare brand mean that you'd need to be a serious VIP to even stand a chance of booking a personal appointment with Justin. In fact, he doesn't give out his number and he doesn't have a salon (he visits clients in their own homes). Although he loves doing colour so much that he does say that once the product business can take care of itself he might be tempted

HAIR GURU JUSTIN ANDERSON

JUSTIN'S CELEBRITY FANS INCLUDE GWYNETH PALTROW AND, OPPOSITE, JENNIFER ANISTON, MARGOT ROBBIE AND MILEY CYRUS. BELOW: HIS HAIRCARE RANGE IS AVAILABLE AT CULTBEAUTY.CO.UK

BEAUTY ASSISTANT: ALICE ROBERTSON. GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX. WIREIMAGE



to open a small salon. Still, if anyone knows about what's required to best maintain colour between salon visits, it's him. And, despite the starry connections, he's an equal opportunities sort and wants to bring that expertise to everyone. His DP Hue range does just that: already a hit in the US, it launches today in the UK. His main advice? Use less shampoo. In fact, he advises barely using it at all because, he says, it just dries hair and strips it of its oils. Hence ACV is his hero product. It uses a high-quality apple cider vinegar so contains beneficial bacteria. 'We took that really seriously and found this guy here in the States who's on a farm out in the middle of nowhere. He is obsessed with ACV and makes it for some of the biggest restaurants around here but we convinced him to work with us.' When you first use the Hair Rinse, Justin recommends alternating it with your usual shampoo to get hair used to the change 'and you'll feel the softness in your hair when normally you'd need a conditioner because shampoo pulls out all the good stuff'. It doesn't sud up like a traditional shampoo but oddly somehow feels as though it does, and has no vinegary smell.

He's the hair hero behind the world's most iconic blondes

There's an accompanying **ACV Scalp Scrub** (£35) which Justin recommends trying once a week, especially if you use a lot of dry shampoo 'which will cake on to the scalp'. His own dry shampoo will launch here later.

Also key in the range is the colour boosting **Gloss +** (£32) which comes in 11 shades, including clear, to bring the shine back to colour when it has dulled due to washing, hard water or pollution.

Another gamechanger is the **Brightening Powder** (£28) which has almost mythical status in the hairdressing industry. You add water to the powder, rub into the hair and it pulls out all the pollution, chlorine and general gunk that dulls the colour. More from this brilliant range is coming soon but I say the sooner you introduce your hair to it the better.

All these products are available from cultbeauty.co.uk.

@edwinaingschambers

JUSTIN'S COLOUR CODE

★ Want to know the secret to Jennifer Aniston's hair colour? 'A lot of contrast because that's when the blonde really pops,' says Justin. 'I keep the depth to it – all the dark underneath – so that when the blonde lays on top it looks brighter. That's because there's so much dimension to the hair. The mistake people make is that they say they want to go blonde and then they get a whole head of solid blonde. The key is the contrast.'

★ If you like the Gwyneth Paltrow blonde it's all about 'a ton of very small, baby highlights that look really natural', says Justin. This is also a great route to go if you have some grey hair. 'Just work your highlights around the grey and it acts like another dimension of blonde,' he says.

★ 'I think blondes are really lucky when they get some grey. I don't think you should fight it and start to try to cover it. If you do that it just becomes a nightmare chore and a big monthly maintenance process. So try to work any grey into your colour if you can,' is Justin's advice.

★ 'The most beautiful brunettes are the ones who have scattered highlights, like the supermodel Gisele used to have,' says Justin. 'This gives dimension to the hair which also makes it look thicker, so I like to see ribbons of blonde going through a brunette.'

★ This colouring trick also helps if you have very fine hair. Adding in some blonde helps to 'mess up the texture a little bit so it feel thicker but the added dimension will also give the appearance that you have more hair,' says Justin. So it's an optical illusion combined with a physical boost.

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YES **YOU** CAN...

...WORK IRIS APFEL'S COLOURFUL STYLE. FASHION DIRECTOR SHELLY VELLA SHOWS YOU HOW

Iris Apfel, the 100-year-old style icon, is famous for her trademark glasses, piles of accessories and bold fashion choices. She has inspired young and old alike to be more confident when it comes to getting dressed. This month sees the launch of her collaboration with H&M and it doesn't disappoint. Think bright, delightfully quirky on-trend pieces that work cross-generationally and still tick the wearability box.

THE STATEMENT SUIT: BROCADE JACKET, £119.99, TROUSERS, £79.99, NECKLACE, £79.99

GLASSES RING, £29.99, FROG RING, £24.99, BRACELETS, £69.99 EACH

ORIENTALISM FEATURES HEAVILY IN IRIS'S WARDROBE, AS SHOWN HERE: A YELLOW KIMONO WORN WITH CHUNKY BRACELETS

FEATHERS AND FLUFF ARE FIRM FAVOURITES, ACCESSORISED HERE WITH ROPES OF TURQUOISE

TRY A FRINGED CO-ORD

This loose-fitting PJ style looks great worn together or styled separately

Shirt jacket, £69.99

Earrings, £34.99

Necklace, £59.99

Trousers, £69.99

WOW IN THIS EMERALD GEM

Think feel-good colour and an easy dress-me-up, dress-me-down silhouette

Dress, £69.99

Bracelet, £69.99

Necklace, £49.99

Earrings, £34.99

GETTY IMAGES

WORK A STANDOUT BLOUSE

It's the perfect summer go-to, as flattering with denim as it is with brocade trousers

Bangle, £59.99

Blouse, £39.99

Trousers, £69.99

Loafers, £119.99

IRIS SAYS 'The collection offers some marvellous pieces that can be used as building blocks for people exploring their personal style. I don't want people to dress like me and I don't want people to think like me – that's not the idea. I want people to think for themselves, to find the colours, cuts, accessories and combinations that work for them, to use their imaginations, to wear what they love. You should be your own style icon.'

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Ferrero Rocher 300g (£2 per 100g). Delivery, collection and minimum basket charges may apply. Carrier bag charges may apply. Delivery/collection slots subject to availability.

FASHION COLUMNIST AND INFLUENCER JOANNE HEGARTY

My bottom line on getaway dressing

'No bums at breakfast' has recently become a fashion mantra of mine. It was born when I was lucky enough to go on a week's sun holiday to soak up some badly needed vitamin D. I always endeavour to live in the moment but when the days are cold, dark and stormy, we all need a little help.

Unsurprisingly, travel websites are reporting more people searching for holidays. So whether you are hitting the slopes, planning a city adventure or dreaming about reading a novel with sand between your toes (I recommend *My Friend Anna* by Rachel DeLoache Williams), it's never too early to start planning your getaway wardrobe.

We stayed in a resort hotel where I enjoyed the feeling of being part of a little international village, floating inside a holiday bubble.

You spot the same faces at the breakfast buffet every morning, nodding hellos over the fresh mango slices, while simultaneously indulging in some serious people-watching. Here are the tips I picked up...

★ Call me square but I don't think anyone should come to breakfast in something that doesn't cover one's derrière. Even if your swimwear is designer and you have legs like Cindy Crawford, nobody but *nobody* wants to see bum at breakfast.

★ A floaty holiday kimono is an excellent fuss-free throw-on. And by adding a couple of your favourite pieces of jewellery, you look like you wake up fabulous every darn morning.

★ A white shirt always looks chic and can be worn open over a slip dress and slides, over swimwear as a cover-up, out for dinner with floaty trousers or tucked into a high-waist skirt with gold jewellery.

WEARING AN EASY-BREEZY HOLIDAY KIMONO BY PIPPA HOLT

Swimwear at the holiday resort breakfast buffet? A no-no for me

★ I rarely wear heels on a beach getaway, and instead look for a stylish pair (or two) of flats – one statement and one simple that can be mixed and matched with the contents of my suitcase.

★ Do wear big sunglasses to breakfast – the bigger the better. They cover a multitude of sins, prevent sun squints and look fabulous with everything.

★ In terms of handbags, I take a basket type for the beach and a couple of small smarter favourites. Big leather bags tend to look cumbersome on holiday.

★ And I like to bring a wardrobe souvenir home with me: a piece of jewellery or a dress that holds holiday memories in its seams.

Follow me on Instagram @thestylistandthewardrobe

A breakfast throw-on that will turn heads. Dress, £265, Mara Hoffman, matchesfashion.com

This will add a splash of colour to your spring and holiday outfits. Bag, £140, apatchy.co.uk

Slinky in silk – made for holiday cocktails. Trousers, £155, thesummeredit.com

Simple but sleek. Sandals, £110, A Emery, net-a-porter.com

Stylish enough to pair with a skirt for lunch. Swimsuit, £145, Hunza G, net-a-porter.com

A perfect holiday pair. Sunglasses, £255, Gucci, matchesfashion.com

85 WAYS TO SAY IT'S SPRING!

Need a wardrobe refresh? Fashion editor *Sophie Dearden* picks the season's most flattering looks

Coat, £349, baumundpferdgarten.com

Shoes, £90, dunelondon.com

Ring, £350, deborahblyth.com

Blazer, £645, trousers, £495, joseph-fashion.com

Trousers, £85, boden.co.uk

SPORTMAX

BRILLIANT WHITE

Fresh and versatile, wear this easy neutral from top to toe – with just a hint of gold

Bag, £1,250, mulberry.com

Skirt, £580, bitestudios.com

Necklace, £175, missoma.com

Top, £95, secondsummerlabel.com

Sunglasses, £135, axelarigato.com

Mules, £55, charleskeith.co.uk

STANDOUT STRIPES

From chevrons to swirls, keep the look playful and you'll be on the right lines

Dress, £245, hesperfox.com

Jumper, £125, kitristudio.com

Bag, £245, joseph-fashion.com

Skirt, £85, houseofsunny.co.uk

Skirt, £79, Somerset by Alice Temperley, johnlewis.com

Dress, £399, lkbennett.com

Top, £160, essentiel-antwerp.com

Jumper, £45.99, zara.com

Sandals, £279, lkbennett.com

Ring, £79.95, anna-nina.nl

Skirt, £99, whistles.com

Cardigan, £39.99, reserved.com

Bracelet, £29.99, pilgrim.net

Top, £205, the-array.com

Dress, £265, thesummeredit.com

Dress, £49.90, uniqlo.com

Bag, £499, cnicol.com

JIL SANDER

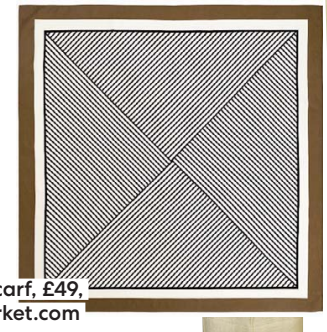
LOW-KEY LUXURY

Think pared-back pieces in tactile fabrics for an understated yet upscale elegance

Trousers, £389, baukjen.com

Trousers, £175, meandem.com

Ring, £30, pandora.net



Scarf, £49, arket.com

Skirt, £79, Ghost, johnlewis.com

Shoes, £179, lkbennett.com

Earrings, £129, daisyjewellery.com

Sunglasses, £150, taylormorriseyewear.com

Bag, £590, agneel.com

Shoes, £59, charleskeith.co.uk

FEEL-GOOD BRIGHTS

Power up your palette with eye-popping colours. Don't hold back – the bolder, the better

Dress, £89, cosstores.com

Bag, £67, jwpei.com

Sandals, £130, ancient-greek-sandals.com

Dress, £135, karenmillen.com

Blazer, £240, secondsummer.com

Jeans, £35.99, shop.mango.com

Top, £85, kitristudio.com

Coat, £69.99, reserved.com

Jumper, £82.50, blake-ldn.com

Cardigan, £150, jigsaw-online.com

Bag, £50, samsoe.com

Shirt, £42, warehousefashion.com

Sweater, £125, kitristudio.com

Skirt, £23.99, newlook.com

Watch, £175, rotarywatches.com

Dress, £80, forevernewclothing.com

Shorts, £195, holzweileroslo.com

ELISABETTA FRANCHI

PRETTY & PREPPY

Look to pleated skirts, tailored shorts, polo tops and chunky loafers – neat!

Trousers, £375, joseph-fashion.com

Sandals, £299, lkbennett.com

Jumper, £70, boden.co.uk

Jumper, £200, lacoste.com

Shoes, £140, ghbass-eu.com

Earrings, £99, zmorton.com

Bag, £425, strathberry.com

Sunglasses, £15, marksandspencer.com

EASY TAILORING

Sharp separates and slick co-ords will work hard for you anytime, anywhere

CHRISTIAN SIRIANO

Jumpsuit, £395, thekooples.com

Sliders, £89, kurtgeiger.com

Bag, £395, aspinaloflondon.com

Waistcoat, £220, cosstores.com

Sunglasses, £110, chimieyewear.com

Blazer, £139.99, trousers, £79.99, hm.com

Blazer, £79.90, uniqlo.com

Trousers, £65, karenmillen.com

Blazer, £545, joseph-fashion.com

Shorts, £180, filippa-k.com

Earrings, £120, missoma.com

Waistcoat, £115, samsoe.com

Shoes, £165, ghbass-eu.com

Bodysuit, £119, alexandramiro.com

FASHION ASSISTANT: STEPHANIE SOFOKLEOUS

'Dreams aren't the only things that can come true...'

Your worst nightmares can too, says ANNE HATHAWAY. She tells *Cole Moreton* how, along with the hit films, happy marriage and Oscar win, she also had an army of haters

PHOTOGRAPHS: FRANCESCO CARROZZINI

Anne Hathaway lives in a gorgeous apartment overlooking New York's Central Park with her husband, producer and jewellery designer Adam Shulman, and their two children, which I catch a glimpse of during our Zoom chat. 'I should have turned the camera to a blank wall,' she half jokes, then adds more seriously, 'I count myself as very fortunate, because I was not born into this. I hope that helps me have a perspective on it and appreciate it.'

Anne, 39, was born in Brooklyn, New York, raised in New Jersey and has been a Hollywood star since the age of 17. She made her name in movies such as *The Princess Diaries*, won an Oscar in 2013 for *Les Misérables* and is now about to appear with Jared Leto in a stunning new Apple TV+ series called *WeCrashed*.

In a neat example of art imitating life, she plays a real-life woman who seems to live a similar kind of Manhattan life not too far from Anne's apartment, and who also has a husband called Adam. 'The Adam thing is kind of weird. But our place is a rental. They bought theirs.'

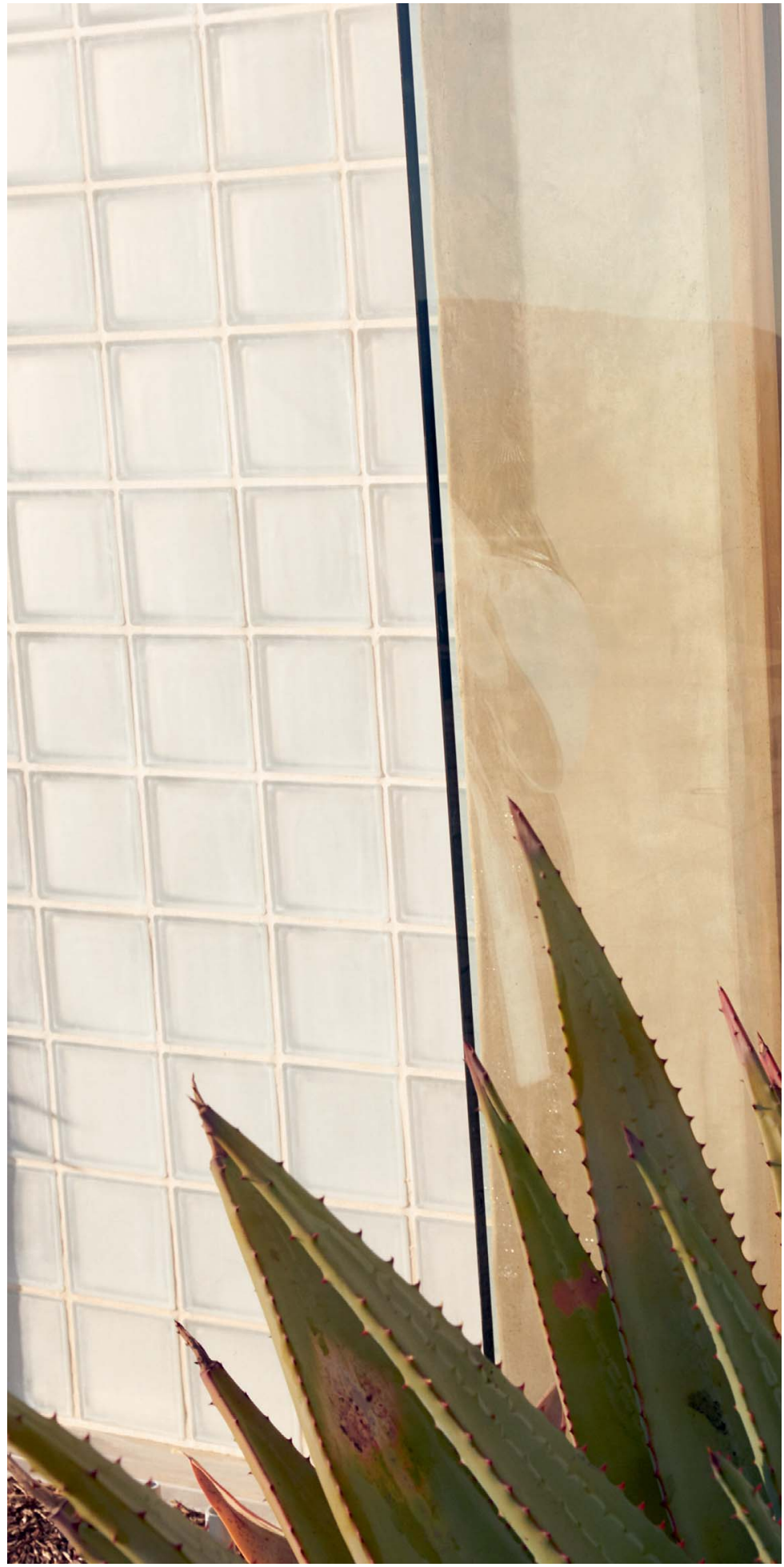
WeCrashed is based on the true story of charismatic Adam Neumann, an Israeli-born entrepreneur who persuaded investors to put billions into his office-space-sharing start-up WeWork before seeing it all come crashing down. 'It's hard to believe it all happened,' says Anne, 'but it did. I guess that's what makes it a great story.'

'I'M INTRIGUED BY THE WHOLE IDEA OF "FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT"'

Neumann sells a vision of happy millennials sharing workspace, playing ping pong, drinking free beer and falling in love. Time and again, he boasts that WeWork is bigger than it is to attract major investors – all until the stock market rumbles the truth. While he's doing this, he's living like a rock star and blowing millions. Anne is superb as his wife and ally Rebekah Paltrow Neumann, a cousin of Gwyneth, who brings style, yoga and a breathtaking ambition to do nothing short of raise the consciousness of the human race. 'I've thought a lot about it and I believe, despite the results, Rebekah had good intentions and meant every word she said. I just don't know that it's possible to save the world and "make a s***-ton of money doing it" [something Adam Neumann famously said with an even more famous shrug]. I hope they've been able to learn and grow from this.'

The Neumanns were forced out of WeWork in 2019 when an attempt to go public failed and over 2,000 employees lost their jobs. The couple were paid a fortune to leave and some people are, understandably, still furious with them. 'We don't judge them. That wasn't the point. But we don't let them off either,' Anne says when asked if the series was too soft on the Neumanns. And it's true, *WeCrashed* is a complex drama that doesn't shy away from the harm they caused. 'I'm intrigued by the whole idea of "fake it till you make it" – of saying something that you intend to be true which, if it works out, nobody questions. It's only when it doesn't work out that we examine it.'

Has she ever faked it herself? 'When I auditioned for



ANNE WITH HER HUSBAND ADAM SHULMAN

Brokeback Mountain, the last question the director Ang Lee asked me was: "Can you ride a horse?" I said: "Yes." And I couldn't.' She smiles. 'I thought to myself: "I have a few weeks to learn."' That's not very long, is it? 'Ha! No, but I am very determined, took it very seriously, worked very hard, and learned how to ride well enough to do the film. But when I said that to get the part, was it true? It was not. Did I see a path where it could be true? Yes, I did. What's the line? When does that become a con?' It's a good point – one of many she raises during our time together.

'Sorry, hold on, someone just came home. Can you give me one second?' I agree, and when she returns she says, 'It was Jack – I just wanted to give him a kiss before nap time.' Jack is two, and his big brother Jonathan is almost six.

As she sits, I ask her about the words on the cushion that were revealed when she got up that read '100% that B***h'. 'Oh, ha! That was a birthday gift. I'm glad my friends see me that way.' Something else that keeps being revealed when the sleeves of her breton-style top push back is a small tattoo on her wrist. I ask about the meaning. She smiles. 'My husband has a matching one.' She holds up her left wrist to show what looks like a 'W' that becomes an 'M' when it's upside down. Is she aware that it's both letters? 'Yes,' she laughs. And it means? 'Many things.'

The couple met through friends in 2008 and married in California four years later. 'He's the guy for me,' she says. 'I do my best to be the woman for him and he makes me feel all the time that I am. Actually, we do our best for each other. I'm lucky. And I know it.'

Luck is something she acknowledges a few times in our interview. 'One of the luckiest breaks I had was being born into a family where acting wasn't feared but respected and valued,' says Anne, whose mother is also an actress. 'Though at the same time, they saw first-hand that it's not necessarily the most mentally healthy career for children,' she explains about her parents' support of her early interest in acting. 'I mean, what exactly *is* a "mentally healthy career for children?"'

So they enrolled her in drama classes and kept her from pursuing professional roles until she found an agent →

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'MY OSCAR WAS AN ACHIEVEMENT, BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN LOVELY IF IT HAD BEEN LESS COMPLICATED'

herself – with their blessing – at the age of 14. She quickly booked a national commercial for the magazine *Better Homes & Gardens*. 'It's worth mentioning I didn't book anything for a year and a half after that,' she says with a laugh.

It was just a few more years until her big break, starring in *The Princess Diaries*. Mentioning it now still makes her smile. 'That movie is one of the greatest gifts of my life and always will be. It's really something to think how loved it is after all these years. It makes people feel comfort. It makes people feel safe. It makes people laugh and they keep discovering it even now. And I was so cared for by Garry Marshall.'

Marshall was the film's director who took her under his wing. 'He watched out for me and was so lovely and made me feel like I had worth. I never experienced anything a 17-year-old shouldn't experience nor was I ever put in a position that a 17-year-old shouldn't be put in. That shouldn't make you lucky – and it shouldn't need to be said – but it was. And it does.'

Over the next decade, Anne enjoyed both commercial success and critical acclaim, starring in blockbusters such as *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Brokeback Mountain* and the Christopher Nolan Batman franchise, as well as being Oscar-nominated for her work in the 2008 Jonathan Demme-directed film *Rachel Getting Married*. However, the peak of her career – so far – was, of course, winning an Oscar for her role as Fantine in *Les Misérables* in 2013.

'It's such a rare thing to experience. So many unlikely things had to come together for that to happen – and with a part that was so personally significant because my mother also played Fantine once too. It's wild.'

The topic of 'winning an Oscar' should be a light subject, but in Anne's case, it just isn't. In 2013 she experienced a vicious wave of bad press, extreme by anyone's standards. I gently ask her about this time, starting with the first thing she said when she won.

'"It came true?"' she says with a wistful smile, remembering the opening line of her speech. 'Yeah. People still tear at that one. It was a strange moment. Such an achievement but also... It would have been lovely if it could have been less complicated. I felt like it was the only thing I could say that held the whole experience. Most people interpreted one half of that phrase accurately.'

And the other half?

'Dreams aren't the only things that can come true.'

Hence those carefully chosen words said at the podium. 'It was my way of acknowledging both realities – the high and the low – the best I could at the time. Without directly talking about it. Because I was counting on there being a time when the negative part was in the rear view. So I've kept working and trying and growing. Just kept on doing what I love and working on myself and that's led me here.'

And it seems to be true. The past decade has seen her become a mother, work again with Christopher Nolan in the sci-fi epic *Interstellar*, star in both the commercial hits

Anne, bloodied but unbowed, in her new series *WeCrashed* and winning an Oscar for her role in *Les Misérables*, 2013

The Intern opposite Robert De Niro as well as alongside Cate Blanchett and Sandra Bullock in *Ocean's Eight*, 'Working with those legends showed me just how much more I have to learn. I was deliriously happy to be there.' She also gave an award-winning performance in a one-woman show called *Grounded* in 2015 at The Public theatre ('such a cool experience but so damn lonely!'). A longtime champion of equality and human rights, she is currently realising a lifelong dream of becoming a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador, a post which began in 2016.

So is she in a new place? 'I think so, yeah. Let's go with that. I am.' She certainly appears to be. She seems relaxed and – surrounded by her family – happy with her lot. 'What a relief to know first-hand that you can. grow That's huge. It takes work, and it's not like that ever stops, but how fortunate to be in a place where you believe, because there can be a way through painful things. It's not lost on me, the gift of the opportunity to have that perspective.'

As our time comes to an end, I say I'll do my best to present her as truthfully as I can and she laughs. 'Oh man. I said the same thing in my head and heart to Rebekah every day on this project. Good luck!'

***WeCrashed* will premiere on Apple TV+ on Friday 18 March**

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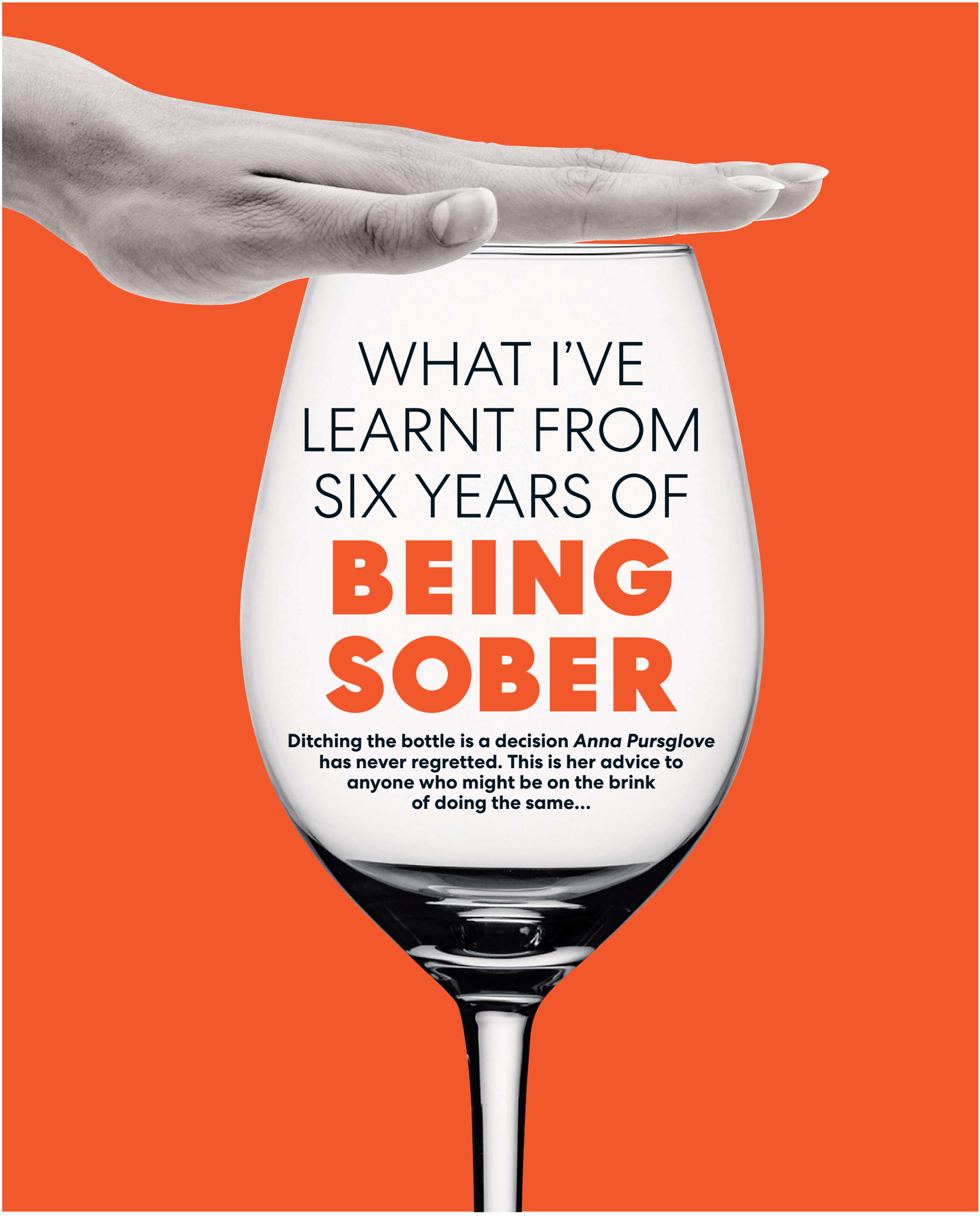

WHAT I'VE LEARNT FROM SIX YEARS OF BEING SOBER

Ditching the bottle is a decision *Anna Pursglove* has never regretted. This is her advice to anyone who might be on the brink of doing the same...

If you're worried about your drinking, let me tell you that six years ago, I was you.

I was 43, I had a great job and a loving husband. We had two healthy children and a nice house – and yet I was scared. Scared by my alcohol consumption. I can't tell you how many units a week I was drinking at the point I gave up. Not because I don't want to but because I genuinely don't know. I was in denial – and people in denial aren't counting. What I did know is that it was too much.

Similarly, I can't give you a single event that made me stop. I've heard other women who have quit talk about hitting 'rock bottom'. About a drink-fuelled horror that made them realise they could no longer coexist with alcohol. For me that defining moment never happened. Instead, I lived with a head full of fears and regrets. Funnily enough, the only thing that gave me respite was more alcohol.

This inability to provide a 'the thing that sobered me up' story doesn't play well when people quiz you. Women, in particular, want to weigh up what you were doing against what they are doing: to reassure themselves that they're fine. Although I can't give you a rock-bottom moment, I could tell you many, many stories about nights (but mostly days after nights) where I profoundly regretted drinking. About the dread that engulfs you when you're not sure who you should be apologising to.

THE TRUTH IS THAT I JUST WOKE UP ONE DAY AND FELT TIRED BY IT ALL

I could tell you about the day I found myself in the offices of a Harley Street doctor, crying as I told her that I was sure the pinprick spots on my chest were a sign of liver failure (they weren't, although that's beside the point). The truth is that I just woke up one day and felt inordinately tired by it all. Tired of feeling guilty when I was hungover on the kids' time. Tired of lying to myself about how much I drank. Tired of feeling tired. It was 20 April 2016, and I haven't drunk since.

New data from the Government's Office for Health Improvement & Disparities shows there are millions of women experiencing the kinds of battles with alcohol that I experienced – and that the numbers are growing by the day. According to these figures, eight million people were drinking hazardous levels in the three months to the end of October 2021 (compared to five million in October 2019). Although these numbers are for England, experts across the UK report a similar picture.

What the study termed 'increasing or higher risk' drinkers are still predominantly male (one in four men as opposed to one in ten women), but the gap is closing. Furthermore, the charity Alcohol Change UK says people aged 55-64 are most likely to drink at higher risk levels and also least likely to be teetotal. This is not to suggest that all problem drinkers are middle-aged – the pandemic has tipped significant numbers of women of all ages into the trouble zone. We're drinking at home so we're drinking for longer and on top of that we're scared and stressed. The more scared and stressed we are, the more we drink yet, paradoxically, the more we drink, the more scared and stressed we become.

I first wrote about being teetotal one year after giving up alcohol. Back then, my editor was very keen to know how I had managed to do it without losing my friends. You'd think that five years on – and with a pandemic under our belts – we wouldn't care so much what others thought but, anecdotally, I can tell you that's not the case. The second most common question I'm asked (after 'how much were you drinking'?) is how I navigate friendships and socialising without the prop of alcohol.

So, for all of you who are worried about your drinking, who would like to stop but are scared about what will happen, this is what I've learnt in the past six years. There is life on the other side. It might look different – and it'll definitely take time to get used to – but it's there. I can't make you any promises about how long the transition will take but I can guarantee that you're going to gain a whole lot more than you lose.

BE PREPARED TO BE INTRODUCED AS THE ONE WHO'S GIVEN UP

This happened a lot when I first stopped drinking. At the time I found it upsetting – as though drinking had been the most interesting thing about me. However, what I came to see over time was that the friends who made continual references to my sobriety were also the ones who were most concerned about their own relationships with alcohol.

When you first give up booze, you'll probably still be in a friendship group where drinking is the norm, so the chances are you'll have female friends who are drinking more than is physically and psychologically good for them. These are the people who will be most threatened by your decision to stop because they will see it as an indictment of their own habits. Over time they'll calm down – particularly if you don't react. It's annoying but it will pass.

DON'T BE TOO APOLOGETIC

At first, when my non-drinking status came up, I'd lie about antibiotics or mutter something about being 'very boring' or the 'designated driver'. I'd cite my running training as the reason for not drinking (and boy, did I clock up a lot of miles in the first few years after I quit – I'd enter every race going and now have a whole drawer of cheap medals and commemorative tops to show for it).

I've stopped doing all that now because not drinking isn't something you need to apologise for. It's not what I tend to open a conversation with but, equally, it's not something I'm ashamed of. Now, if someone offers me a glass of wine, I say: 'Thanks, but I don't drink alcohol.' The person offering will invariably look flustered and apologise but the embarrassment doesn't last long.

LEAVE EARLY – NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN

Will you miss all the fun if you're not up until 3am with the drinkers? You won't. As a rule, I've discovered that people who are drinking too much and too fast will be fun for about two hours. So if the dinner started at →

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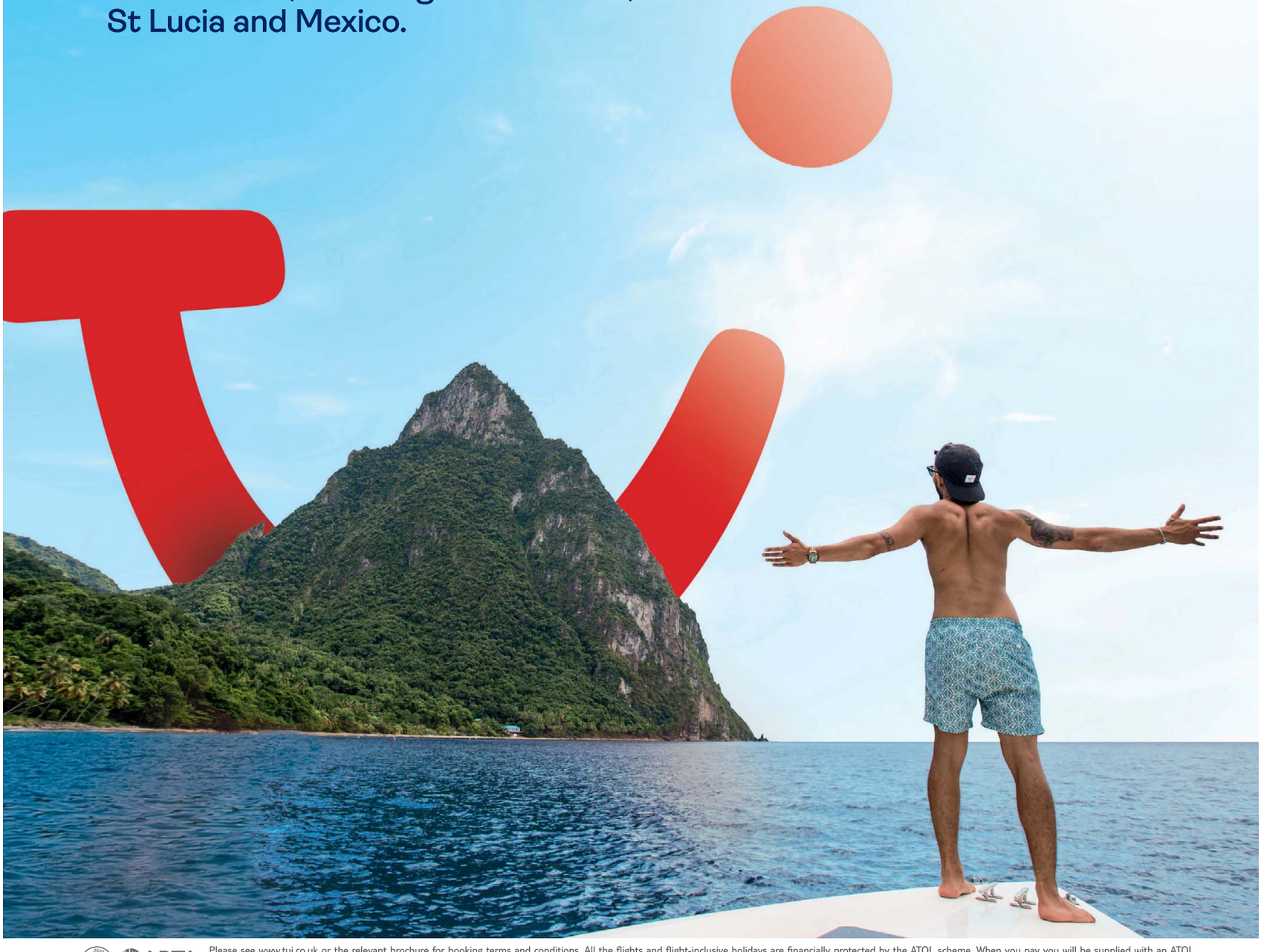

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7.30pm then you've usually got until about 9.30pm to have a decent conversation. After that time, someone will either start repeating themselves endlessly, telling you they love you or crying about something random (possibly all three). In other words, get out by 10.30 and probably closer to 10pm if you can manage it. Very drunk people only have a hazy relationship with time so they won't remember when you left.

ENJOY THE RIDICULOUS EXCUSES

Another interesting phenomenon among drunk women (and it does seem to be women in particular) is the desire to explain away their drunkenness. As the non-drinker in the group, female friends will target you for these I-might-look-drunk-but... explanations. My advice is to enjoy their absurdity.

One of my favourites was the friend who insisted that it wasn't the two bottles of prosecco which had made her vomit loudly in the downstairs loo (to the horror of the assembled dinner-party guests) but the fact that she'd joined a running club and now had an athlete's sensitive metabolism.

DON'T TRY TOO HARD TO FIT INTO A DRINKER'S WORLD

In the early months, you'll make desperate attempts not to stand out as the teetotaller in the room. You will be wrestling with all manner of insecurities about how public displays of sobriety might make you seem boring or smug.

These feelings will manifest as spending too much time sourcing soft drinks that look like alcoholic ones. You'll almost certainly work your way through a variety of nonalcoholic wines, which will be uniformly undrinkable. Similarly, you'll start off by sitting through things that drinkers want to do, like hanging about in freezing cold pub gardens for hours on end.

YOU WON'T ALWAYS OFFER TO DRIVE

After a year or so, however, you will start to get comfortable in your sober skin. You'll drink herbal tea in pubs if you fancy it. You'll skip the beer garden in early March, thanks anyway, and you'll let someone else drive once in a while.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE BOREDOM AS A DRINKING TRIGGER

Much is written about stress and anxiety as triggers for drinking, but I'd add boredom to that list. I'm not suggesting that it's possible to eradicate boredom from your life entirely, but rather that you remind yourself beforehand that boring situations might have you reaching for the merlot. It's surprising how a drinking trigger loses its power when you anticipate it.

The closest I've come to relapsing was during a press trip reception. There were scores of journalists present and we were all waiting for Nicole Kidman in an industrial hangar on the outskirts of Paris. The place was chilly, nobody knew anyone nor exactly when we might get our interviews. I sat for nearly three hours, staring at the glass of red wine which had been placed in front of me, thinking: 'If nothing happens in 20 minutes, I'm drinking that.'

I'm pleased to report that Nicole did, finally, show up and was very obliging. I got the interview I needed and I didn't drink that glass of wine.

GETTY IMAGES

ALCOHOL WILL STOP MATTERING TO YOU

After questions about how much I drank, what made me stop and how I socialise without booze – the next most common question I'm asked is whether I still want to drink.

I don't.

Six years down the line, alcohol has lost its attraction. That's not to say that I could start drinking again because I'm pretty sure that wouldn't end well. What I mean is that I don't feel a desperate desire to drink every time I see someone pouring a glass of wine. Other people can drink and I can not drink. It doesn't matter any more.

FORGET DUTCH COURAGE – YOU'LL BE BRAVER WITHOUT BOOZE

For me – as for everyone who drinks too much – alcohol was a way to avoid feeling my feelings. It's no coincidence that people refer to being very drunk as being 'out of your head'. Being out of your head is exactly where you're trying to be because it's too difficult to be inside it. Once you're brave enough to start investigating what it is you were hiding from, there will be no stopping you.

Five years on from my last drink, I found the courage to go back to university and begin training as a counsellor. I'd always wanted to do it but could never (as a drinker) countenance the levels of psychological probing required.

I've no idea yet where the journey is going to take me, but what I do know is that, if I hadn't stopped drinking, I'd never have been brave enough to take the first step.

For advice, support and a quiz to find out whether your drinking is healthy, visit alcoholchange.org.uk

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I'M READY FOR MY FRUITY FACIAL NOW...

Beauty treatments, designer gear, shower rooms... *Danielle Hine* reveals how we've turned our pandemic puppies into pampered pooches

The UK went dog-mad during the pandemic, with estimates suggesting dog ownership increased by ten per cent to around 12 million. Did we have a clear idea of what we were going to do with all these four-legged friends once the lockdowns ended? Not really – we just knew we wanted their company to ease the pain of being stuck at home.

Then the kids went back to school, some of us went back to work, but what about the lockdown pups (now demanding teenagers)? Of course, we felt terrible about leaving them. So, to assuage the guilt, we bought them stuff. A whole load of stuff.

The global dog clothing and accessories market hit around £7.1 billion in 2020 and is estimated to reach £12.24 billion by 2028, according to market research firm Million Insights.

In the UK, Pets at Home has experienced a huge demand for its pet spa treatments. 'We're seeing many trends from the human market emerging for dogs now,' says Claire Gavin, director of creative development and innovation.

'In 2020 we had 77,000 dogs visiting our spas in the run-up to Christmas, and we exceeded that in 2021. I had to book in my cockapoo Amber weeks in advance!' (Amber got a berry burst scented shampoo, a hydrating butter moisturising treatment, a blueberry facial and a teeth clean followed by a fresh-breath foam, before a special balm was applied to her paws and nose. She left sporting a bow tie.)

GETTY IMAGES

'SHE HATES THE COLD SO SHE HAS A BARBOUR JACKET AND RALPH LAUREN JUMPER'

Victoria Keating, director of the Animal Magic Family Pet Retreat in Oakworth, West Yorkshire (offering crèche and pampering services), confirms that the pandemic has pushed up the amount that owners are prepared to fork out. 'Pre-Covid my average customer spend was £200 per month. Now it's £600.'

It's not surprising companies are chasing the 'hound pound' given this ballooning market and the fact that, according to Mintel, 51 per cent of pet-care buyers would rather cut spending on themselves than on their pets.

And a fair bit of scrimping would need to be done for anyone wanting to enter the world of the designer dog. You can drop £12,000 on a Christopher Howe dog settee or £640 on a silver-plated bowl set from Selfridges. Then there's the Alessi dog waste bag holder (£34) and Aesop Animal Wash (£27).

Freelance editor Nicky Rampley-Clarke and husband John, from Surrey, recently spent £20,000 converting their garage to incorporate a special shower for their five-month-old springer spaniel India.

'Our builders have never done one before, and my dad thinks it's the maddest thing he ever heard,' says Nicky. 'Now, after muddy walks, we can pop her straight into her own warm shower area. No need for her to shake herself dry all over the house!'

Nicky is also making a list of must-haves for India's wardrobe. 'She hates the cold so a Barbour jacket is the first priority, followed by a Ralph Lauren jumper. We spent £100 on a turquoise leather collar from Selfridges that looks like jewellery. India is our baby, but we believe in discipline, exercise and love in that order to raise a well-rounded dog. We just want to spoil her in the process.'

And like many of us, the lockdown dog needs a curated social life, too. Belle Boonroong, a data consultant based in London, has three pomeranians who are a hit on the canine party circuit. 'In 2019 it seemed like we had a [dog] birthday every month,' she admits. 'We also threw a joint dog birthday party with a Hawaiian theme for Cedric and a couple of his friends at Neverland beach huts in Fulham – it cost about £900 between us. We had 27 dog guests, gift bags for them all, birthday cake and treats.

'Last July, after Covid restrictions had lifted, we did a birthday for Cedric and Bilbo in Regent's Park for around 15 dogs and their humans. I spent about £200 on gift bags, drinks and food, and got a bespoke cake from Dandie Dog Cafe.'

Billy, a four-year-old parson russell terrier, is a big fan of his birthday get-togethers, says owner Collette Cooper, a musician and actor. 'He has loads of mates so they have a proper rave,' she laughs. 'I make goody bags for his friends which consist of Earth Animal chews, Fresco dog treats and Sniffe & Likkit grooming products.'

So if your New Year resolution was to budget better, we have one piece of advice... do NOT buy a puppy.

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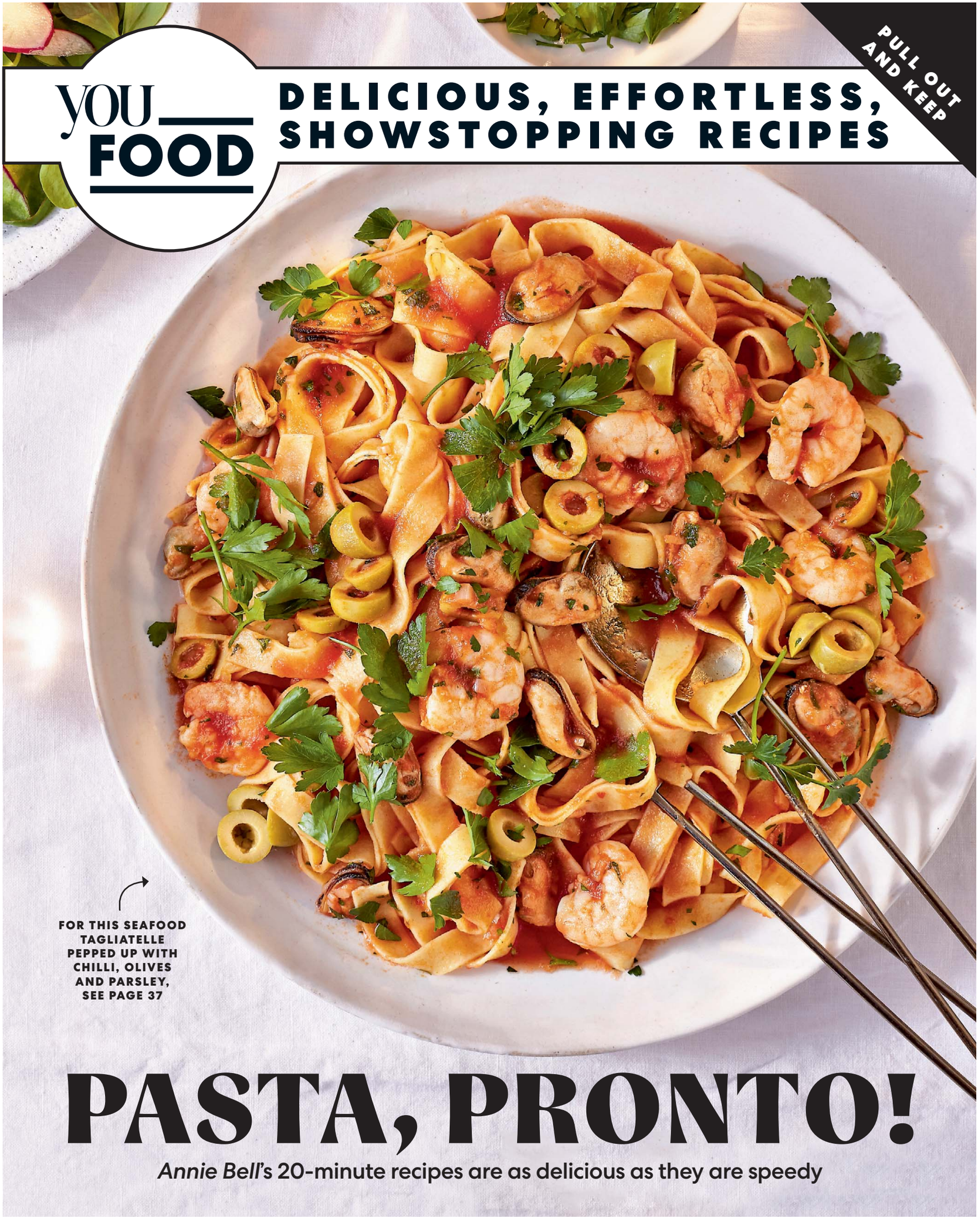

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PASTA, PRONTO!

Annie Bell's 20-minute recipes are as delicious as they are speedy

FARFALLE WITH SPINACH AND DOLCELATTE

Pasta sauces don't come greener than this, with pockets of silky melted blue cheese.

SERVES 4

300g farfalle
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve
4 spring onions, trimmed and sliced
500g spinach, washed
1 heaped tbsp crème fraîche
a generous squeeze of lemon juice
30g freshly grated parmesan, plus extra to serve
sea salt and black pepper
freshly grated nutmeg
150g dolcelatte or gorgonzola, broken into nibs

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the pasta, stir and cook according to the packet instructions until just tender.

★ At the same time, drizzle the oil over the base of a large saucepan, scatter over the spring onions and pile the spinach on top. Now cover with a lid, pressing the spinach down if necessary, and cook over a medium heat for about 10 minutes until wilted, stirring halfway through.

★ Whiz the contents of the pan – including any liquid – with the crème fraîche, a generous squeeze of lemon juice, the parmesan, some seasoning and nutmeg to a smooth purée in a blender. Pour this back into the pan and gently reheat.

★ Drain the pasta using a colander, then toss into the sauce and fold in the cheese, which will soften with the heat. Spread the pasta over the base of four shallow bowls, then liberally scatter with parmesan and drizzle over a little more oil.

ANCHOVY, CAPER AND CHILLI LINGUINE

This answers the call of hunger after a night out or long day. It's the ultimate pared-back pasta that is as feisty as it is minimal.

SERVES 4

400g linguine
12 anchovy fillets
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped
1 heaped tsp finely chopped medium-hot red chilli
2 heaped tbsp nonpareille capers, rinsed
lemon wedges to serve

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the linguine, give it a stir and cook according to the packet instructions until just tender.
★ Meanwhile, slice a couple of anchovy fillets into fine strips and reserve them, then chop the remainder. Gently heat 2 tbsp oil with the garlic, chilli and chopped anchovies for about a minute, crushing the anchovies to a paste. Remove from the heat and stir in the capers.
★ Drain the pasta using a colander, then add to the frying pan with another 2 tbsp oil and toss to coat.
★ Serve with the slivers of anchovy on top, and the lemon wedges on the side.

ROCKET AND LEMON FUSILLI

I love this lemony sauce and, yes, this is a lot of rocket but it cooks down to nothing when wilted. Red lentil pasta is rich in protein and more nourishing than white, so you don't need as much.

SERVES 4

200g red lentil fusilli (or 350g regular fusilli)
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve
1 banana shallot, peeled and finely chopped
finely grated zest of 1 lemon, plus 1 tbsp juice
200g rocket, a handful reserved to garnish and the rest coarsely chopped
50g freshly grated parmesan, plus fine shavings to serve
sea salt and black pepper

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the pasta, give it a stir and cook according to the packet instructions until just tender.
★ Meanwhile, heat 1 tbsp of oil in another large pan over a medium heat and fry the shallot for a minute or two until softened, then stir in the lemon zest. Add the chopped rocket about a third at a time, stirring until it wilts.
★ Reserving a mug of cooking liquid, drain the pasta using a colander and add it to the pan with the rocket. Add the parmesan, the lemon juice and about half a mug of the cooking water. Gently heat, stirring until the pasta is coated in a creamy sauce (add a little more cooking liquid if needed). Taste for seasoning and serve scattered with the reserved rocket leaves, more parmesan and an extra drizzle of oil.

PANCETTA CARBONARA

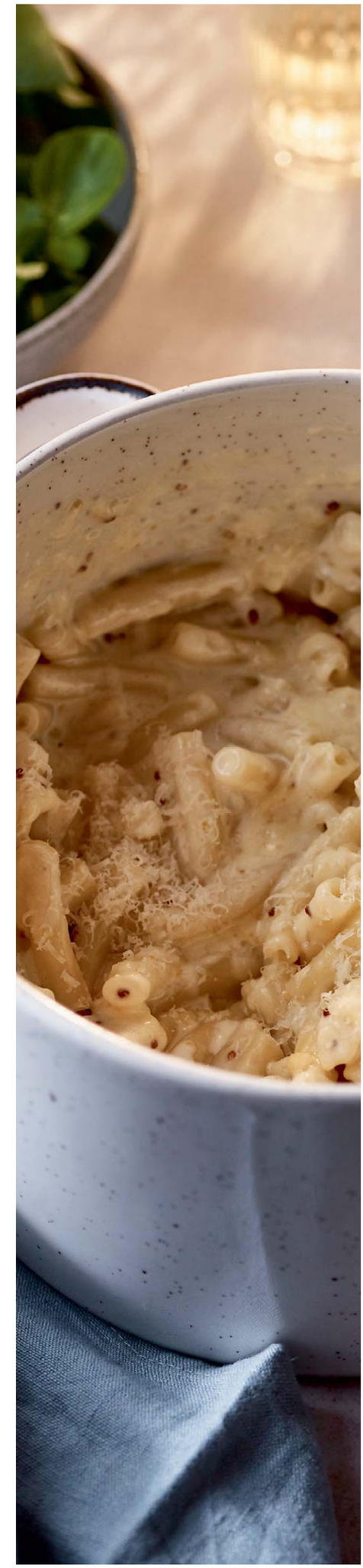
Carbonara is the ultimate 20-minute pasta and this is my new improved recipe – super creamy with extra egg yolks and lots of crispy pancetta.

SERVES 4

400g spaghetti
20g unsalted butter
225g pancetta, sliced into thin strips
4 tbsp white wine
2 large free-range eggs, plus 2 egg yolks
75g freshly grated parmesan, plus extra to serve
4 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
sea salt and black pepper

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil and add the spaghetti, stir to separate it and cook according to the packet instructions, until just tender.
★ Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large nonstick frying pan over a medium heat, add the pancetta and fry until it turns crisp, stirring occasionally. Add the wine and cook for about 1 minute, then remove from the heat.
★ Lightly beat the eggs and yolks in a large bowl, blend in the parmesan and the parsley and season well.
★ Drain the spaghetti, though not too thoroughly, then rapidly toss it into the egg and cheese mixture. Quickly reheat the pancetta then toss the entire contents of the pan into the pasta. Taste for seasoning and serve straight away with more parmesan grated over.

RECIPES: ANNIE BELL. PHOTOGRAPHS: NASSIMA ROTHACKER. FOOD STYLING: SEIKO HATFIELD. STYLING: LAUREN MILLER. PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: MARIA AVERSO. FOOD STYLING ASSISTANT: SOPHIE GARWOOD



FRESH TOMATO AND BASIL PENNE

A sauce that cooks for just 1 minute? It sounds too good to be true but it is as fresh and lively as it is speedy.

SERVES 4

300g penne
500g cherry tomatoes, halved
sea salt and black pepper
20g unsalted butter
25g basil leaves, torn in two or three
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve
2 tsp balsamic vinegar
freshly grated parmesan, to serve

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the pasta, stir then cook according to the packet instructions until just tender.
★ Meanwhile, season the tomatoes in a large bowl. Melt the butter in a medium pan over a medium heat, add the tomatoes and basil then stir for about 1 minute to heat through. Remove from the heat, stir in the olive oil and balsamic vinegar, cover and set aside.
★ Drain the pasta using a colander and return it to the pan. Spoon over half the tomatoes and dressing and gently combine. Serve in shallow plates with the remaining tomatoes and dressing spooned in the centre, then liberally dust with parmesan and drizzle over a thread of oil.

ONE-POT MACARONI CHEESE

This mac 'n' cheese requires zero skill and just one pan. There is nothing to stop the indulgence of smothering it with even more cheese and popping it under the grill.

SERVES 2-3

700ml water
60ml double cream
225g macaroni
1 heaped tbsp cornflour blended with 2 tbsp water
1 heaped tsp grainy mustard
100g grated extra mature cheddar
25g freshly grated parmesan
sea salt and black pepper
freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
watercress, to serve

★ Combine the water and cream in a small nonstick saucepan, bring to the boil, stir in the macaroni and cook over a low heat according to the packet instructions until just tender, stirring now and again.
★ Stir in the cornflour solution and simmer for a minute to thicken. Remove from the heat and stir in the mustard and both cheeses which should melt instantly, then season to taste with salt and pepper, and nutmeg if wished. Serve with a pile of watercress.

SEAFOOD TAGLIATELLE

This pasta saves on time with ready-prepared seafood, pepped up with chilli, olives and parsley.

SERVES 4

300g tagliatelle
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 banana shallot, peeled and finely chopped
250ml tomato passata
a pinch of dried chilli flakes
sea salt
150g raw king prawns
150g cooked mussels
75g pitted green olives, thickly sliced
a handful of coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley, plus extra to serve

★ Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the tagliatelle, give it a stir then cook according to the packet instructions until just tender.
★ Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat and fry the shallot for a couple of minutes until softened and starting to colour, stirring occasionally.
★ Add the tomato passata, chilli and a little salt, then bring to a simmer. Stir in the seafood, cover and cook for 5 minutes until the prawns are evenly pink.
★ Stir in the olives and parsley. Drain the pasta and gently mix in with the sauce. Serve scattered with extra parsley.

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TOM PARKER BOWLES & OLLY SMITH

YOU MAGAZINE'S BRILLIANT RESTAURANT CRITIC AND WINE EXPERT

EATING OUT

Tom feels the heat from a Thai concession tucked away in a London pub

'How hot do you want your som tum?' asks the waitress with a smile. I'm standing by the counter of Khun Pakin Thai, a small and unassuming Thai concession tucked away in the corner of The Salutation pub, on King Street, West London. 'Thai hot,' I reply with a macho growl. Just in case she's mistaken me for some pale, posh Englishman with a pathetically vainglorious view of his capsaicin capacity. She nods and grins. 'So five chillies level? That's pretty hot.'

'Pretty hot', it turns out, is an early contender for understatement of the year. It's a glorious som tum pu plara, no doubt about that, dark as stagnant pond water, the crisp, shredded green papaya dressed in a mixture of sharp lime juice, sour tamarind and pla ra – moody, funkily fermented fish sauce. There are tiny pickled crab, ready to crunch and suck, and the soft base note of palm sugar. And chilli, lots of it, fresh and dried, enough to halt a rampaging elephant. A distant rumble of heat first, which gradually builds into a terrifying crescendo, a furious inferno that rolls down the throat in great burning waves.

Within seconds, speaking becomes impossible, my tongue transformed into a useless lump of gristle. My vision blurs and head turns giddy, as lights become more vivid, sounds more acute. Even thinking hurts. But this is pain of the most exquisite kind, as the som tum is sensationally good. And I just can't help going back for more.

'Pretty hot', it turns out, is an understatement of the year

Kung chae nam pla, raw prawns buried under mint leaves and thin slices of raw garlic, has a brisk rather than brutal heat, the flavours fresh, clean and elegantly balanced. Just like the pork larb, zinging vitality with slivers of red onion and a tangle of fresh herbs.

'Fresh, clean and elegantly balanced' – the pork larb is full of zinging vitality

Not everything is about the chilli. Mu ping, chewy, charred pork skewers, remind me of the sticky Chiang Mai nights, while kho mu yang, grilled pork neck, has tender charm, and a piquant dipping sauce. Khun Pakin was recommended by the lovely people at Jin Da, just around the corner. Skip past the standard menu, they said, and get stuck into 'Esarn Thai Originals'. Wise advice, and there's so much more to try. This now makes it three serious regional Thai places, mere metres apart. When it comes to good value, pretty exceptional restaurants, King Street can do battle with the best.

About £20 per head; Khun Pakin Thai at The Salutation, 154 King Street, London W6; salutationhammersmith.co.uk

DRINKS: Olly's best wines online

I love hunting online for thrilling wines – bottles of specialist character that light up the moment and live long in the memory. Buying by the case offers the best value and cuts out all the heavy lifting. Try emergingvines.co.uk – superb for English wine – while passionevino.co.uk is great fun for Italian wines and there's a well curated selection of natural wines at nattyboywines.co.uk.

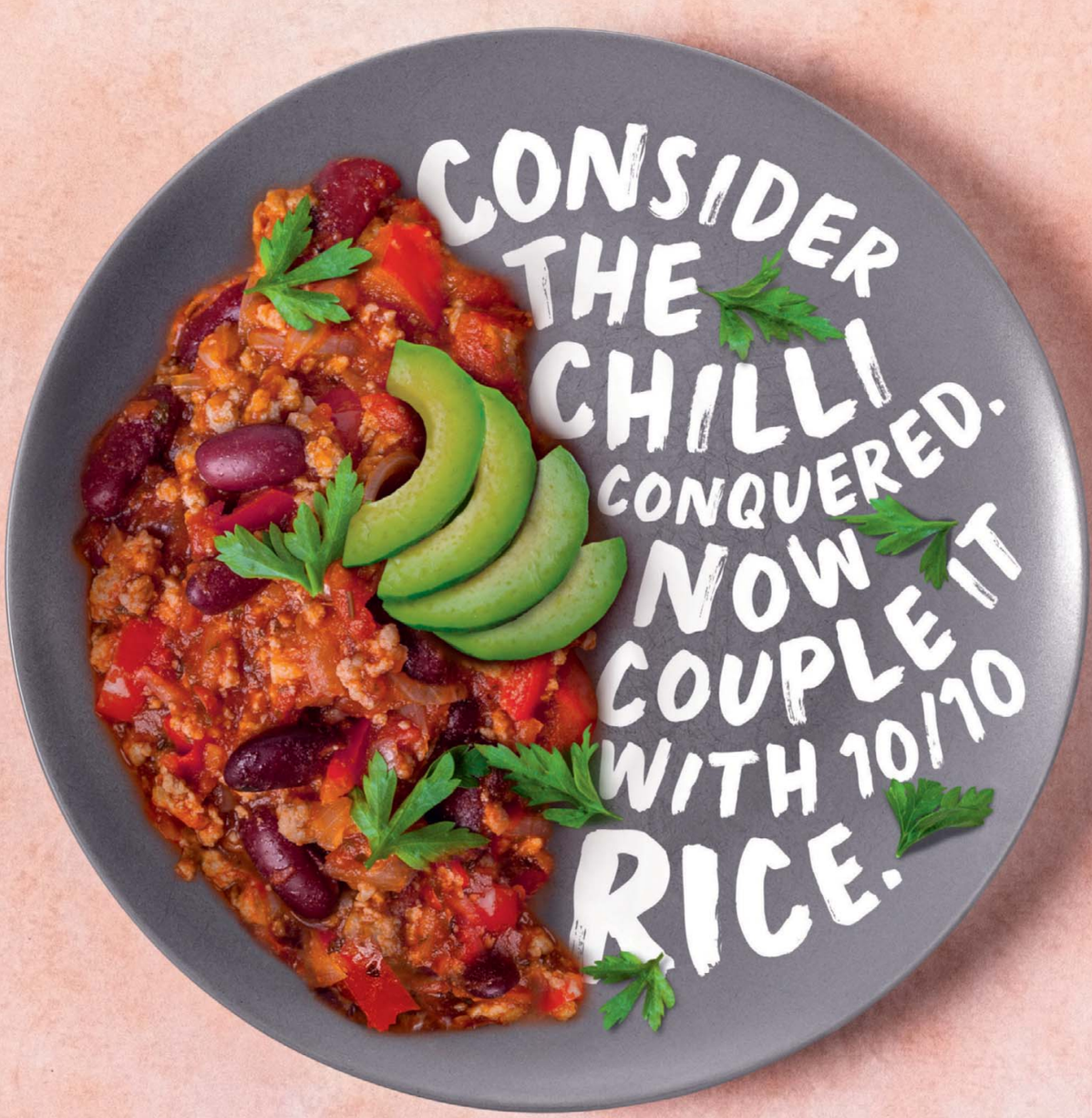
WINE OF THE WEEK DOMAINE DU MÉTÉORE LÉONIDES FAUGÈRES 2018 (13.5%), £15, gnarlyvines.co.uk. Scented and elegant. Wine of the year so far.

THE WINE ATLAS FETEASCA REGALA (12%), £5, asda.com. Britain's best-value white online – surging with tropical freshness and scented splendour.

VERTIGES 2020 VALLÉE DU PARADIS IGP (14%), £10.49, laithwaites.co.uk. Voluptuous and fruity, sunshine has been lavished on this super-supple red. Absolutely delightful.

RACINE PINOT NOIR BRUNO LAFON & FRANÇOIS CHAMBOISSIER 2020 (13%), £12.40, hhandc.co.uk. Light and bright as a cherry swinging from a star. Divinely pure.

PENN CROFT BACCHUS 2020 (12%), £22.99, tivoliwines.co.uk. Dazzling, crisp and delicious, this is benchmark British brilliance – splash out on this tangy, zesty treat.



ELEVATE YOUR PLATE

WITH THE GREATEST GRAINS & FINEST FLAVOURS

'There is no grave. No baby photos. I only have my story'

Losing her longed-for first baby halfway through her pregnancy was devastating for comedy star RACHEL PARRIS. In these brutally honest extracts from her diary, she reveals what she had to go through – and the bittersweet joy of getting pregnant again

A few years ago, as part of one of my comedy shows that I took on tour, I asked the audience every night to contribute their personal life advice on little scraps of paper. Little did I realise that there were times in the next year when I would desperately need advice as I lived through the uncertainty, fear and grief of losing a longed-for baby. One of the pieces of advice that I found in my collection, from an unknown audience member, stayed with me: 'What's for you won't pass you.' But as I veered between deep fear that I wouldn't ever have a child and longing for the one I had lost, I began to question it. What if things that are meant for you do pass you after all? That's true for me – and for anyone who doesn't have something they know, for certain, should be part of their life.

'THE HORROR DIDN'T KICK IN TILL THE NEXT MORNING'

3 October 2020: I got pregnant back in spring – during that first proper lockdown. The baby wasn't conceived in a spirit of panic or boredom or 'Why not, there's literally nothing else to do?' It was very planned and hoped for; we'd been trying for a while and I was so excited. It was my first. I was about to turn 36.

When I was 18 weeks pregnant, I had some bleeding. I felt fairly complacent about it – I've got what my husband [comedian Marcus Brigstocke] and I have darkly termed 'a bleedy cervix' (this got a mixed reaction from the midwives, quite a tough crowd). So I was surprised when the doctor told me I had to stay in hospital because it wasn't a 'normal amount' of bleeding.

I flipped 180 degrees from complacency to the assumption that I might be in the early stages of miscarrying. Suddenly I was paying incredibly close attention to what emerged from my vagina – as was everyone else. I got used to midwives and doctors asking to view the sanitary pad I was wearing – I'd whip down my pants and they'd stare, with high curiosity, mild surprise and, later on, occasional pleasure, like it was a bold new artwork by Damien Hirst.

After a week, the bleeding stopped and I was allowed to go home. For the next ten days, I fell back into confidence in the pregnancy. I thought we had experienced the scary bump in the road, and it was over. But then the bleeding started again – this time with sharp pains, which I found out later were early contractions. I went for my 20-week scan and there were several problems – the pain, the bleeding, a shortened cervix [another sign of labour].

I was readmitted to hospital. I knew all the midwives now and they greeted me cheerily, and I greeted them cheerily back because what else can you do? 'Hello again! Yes, bleeding again haha – what am I like?' I didn't want to be there, but as I was, I was very glad to be cared for by people I already knew.

I saw a different doctor every day and was told alternately that either it might be OK – they'd seen mothers bleed this much and still go on to have healthy babies – or 'this is very worrying; you are likely to lose your baby'. The certainty of either outcome changed constantly over the next week. On and off – hope and despair, hope and despair. Crying and sleeping and not moving – not an inch, moving might hurt the baby, just stay still – taking iron supplements, laxatives, painkillers, going for twice-daily health checks with hours of emptiness in between, scans, infrequent toilet trips, changing pads, bad news, good news, well-meaning cleaning ladies telling me that they were praying for the baby, and hope and despair, and hope, and despair.

It was August 2020: visitors were not

Rachel during her pregnancy with her son Billy last year

allowed in hospital due to Covid, so that week was spent alone in the hospital bed, endlessly FaceTiming my husband, who was with me, in every way he was allowed to be, heartbroken to be kept away.

I started to feel cautiously optimistic, having been in a week; the baby's heartbeat remained strong, and it seemed possible that, with bed rest, it might just be all right. I was now 21 weeks. But that night, when the midwives came to do the routine monitoring, they couldn't find the heartbeat. 'This happened yesterday,' I said, 'but they found it eventually – the baby's just hiding.' They smiled and kept looking, then left to fetch a doctor. I'd never met this doctor before, and she came in and said, 'I'm very sorry to meet you in such sad circumstances.'

That's when I realised what was happening. And everything changed.

She explained that the scan showed that my waters had broken, not suddenly, but gradually over the last few days. She explained that I would go into labour and would give birth – but that our baby couldn't survive.

When labour started, I would be put in

'MY BODY FELT POINTLESS. I HAD NOTHING TO SHOW. NOTHING TO HOLD'

a special delivery room for exactly these circumstances. Until I was in there, Marcus wasn't allowed to come in – I was supposed to spend the next night and day alone, knowing the baby inside me was dying. In tears and shaking, I asked the midwife if they would make an exception. Thankfully, they agreed, and Marcus came that night.

The next two days were surreal, hard, powerful, painful, awful, intense, sad, loving. We were cocooned in this web of people whose job it is to be kind and extraordinary. Midwives, bereavement specialists, consultants and nurses quietly descended to explain, comfort and help. Even at such a busy time, they never once made it seem like they were in a hurry: when Marcus went for a breath of fresh air, a specialist midwife literally ran after him to show him an alternative route, so that he wouldn't have to walk through the maternity ward and hear the cries of healthy babies.

The day of labour I was full of oxytocin and felt more powerful than sad. Marcus and I distracted ourselves by listening to songs by Flight of the Conchords and watching Fry and Laurie sketches between contractions. When the baby came, we held hands and cried. The midwife, who →

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had been with us all day and who delivered the baby, cried with us. A little later, we saw and held our baby and said goodbye.

The next morning, the real horror kicked in. I'd been high as a kite, too exhausted and in too much pain to take it all in, but waking up, with the drugs and hormones out of my system and nothing in my belly, I felt completely empty. My body felt pointless. I had nothing to show and nothing to hold.

When you lose a baby that you never got to know, you can't look at a photo of them or treasure a memory. But in the months leading up to it, mentally and physically, you've started to become a mother. Yet, after you've given birth, if the baby doesn't live, no one knows that change happened. People look at you as if you are the same person you were before. But you're not. You *are* a parent. But no one knows.

You want to talk about the baby. You grew it and it came into the world, and it left, and what makes it worse is having no way to mark that. So, after some time, I talked publicly about it, not in some selfless act of compassion, but for me and for my baby: 'Look, everyone – I had a baby.' The impulse is still there, like any mother wanting to show off their baby. You have nothing to show people. No grave. No baby photos to post. You only have your story.

'What's for you won't pass you' is an old Irish saying. It seems hopeful on the surface of it – that something all-powerful has an eye on everything and that when something passes you, it was never meant to be yours anyway; don't worry, something or someone else will come along.

But it works less well after a miscarriage, and yet people say things like: 'It wasn't meant to be'; 'It wasn't the right time'; 'What's for you won't pass you.'

But it's not true. Assigning a rhyme and reason to these things isn't helpful. There is none. Some things are simply s**t and there's no silver lining. Sometimes things that *were* for you pass you.

'I'M SCARED SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG AGAIN'

25 June 2021: I write this at 34 weeks pregnant with my second pregnancy. He is kicking as I write, and I feel glad every day that my son is such a lairy baby, even when he's settled on my bladder and seems to enjoy Irish dancing. I love the reassurance. It makes me feel hopeful that in a few weeks I will have a baby. Hopeful but not certain.

In the last month, when people see my bump, they ask 'Is it your first?' I'm not sure what to tell them. Because, at present, he is not my first anything. He is the second baby I've carried; he has been in my belly for a few weeks longer than my daughter was. I have had two pregnancies and no children.

Rachel with husband Marcus and their son Billy this Valentine's Day

I am grateful that I have hope now and more confidence in the pregnancy than I did up until a month ago. The day when I was told, 'If he came now, he'd survive' was a huge relief; I had been holding my breath to get to that point.

I feel, in fact, so happy, so content, that it scares me. I am in love with my husband, I am pregnant and some days it feels so perfect, I'm scared something will go wrong like it did before. I feel I know my baby a bit already. His kicking and moving make me laugh – they're so strange and strong. I find him eccentric, a bit of a character. The thought of losing him is so heartbreaking that I can hardly even think about it.

'THE DAY WHEN I WAS TOLD, "IF THE BABY CAME NOW, HE'D SURVIVE" WAS A HUGE RELIEF'

My husband worries that I am too aware of the statistics of late miscarriage, of stillbirth, but, when you have been that unlikely statistic, it is hard not to consider them again. It is a part of our journey: a heightened awareness. Our ears are pricked up, ready for danger.

In the past few months, I've felt more able to connect with my friends who gave birth around the time of our loss. I thought it would be hard meeting their babies but, once I did, it was lovely because they were lovely, and this isn't my baby, it's theirs. It was hard seeing my husband playing with our friends' new babies. He should be playing with our baby, I thought; I haven't been able to give him a baby to hold. There will always be moments that sting, but they are becoming less frequent.

I am already in love with my son and I am bursting with excitement to meet him. People over-use the phrase 'I can't wait' but for me it is a daily effort: I count minutes and hours and days. I need him safe, where I can see him and hold him. I am hopeful. It has been a rainy, cold spring but the sun has finally come out in these early June days. I hope it stays until he arrives. I hope I am holding a hot, grumpy baby in the sweaty heat of August. I hope. I am happy, I am hopeful and I am grateful. I am ready.

'I CAN'T BELIEVE I GET TO KEEP HIM'

17 September 2021 : This morning, I was up at 3.30am, 6am and 8am.

I have been vomited on twice.

I have poo on my dressing gown.

My tits hurt.

My head hurts.

I'm starving.

And a demonic siren is going off inches from my head.

I am very lucky.

My beautiful boy arrived at teatime on a cold day at the end of July, all purple and covered in white goop. Summer never came this year, but our summer, our sunshine, came in the form of this little parcel.

From the moment he was handed to me, I couldn't quite believe he was mine. I can't believe I get to keep him. I know I'm biased, but he is the best baby of them all.

I am so exhausted some days I can't move my face. Turns out there's very little difference between resting bitch face and knackered mum face. 'Nap whenever you can', the advice says, but it doesn't work – when they're awake you're looking after them, and when they're asleep you finally get time to eat, wee and possibly, as a luxury, wash.

It's tiring, it's upsetting, it's life-changing. It is the best thing in the world.

We were given piles of secondhand baby clothes and one of the baby-grows has 'Little Miracle' on the front. When I first saw it, before he was born, I thought it was mawkish. But I get it now. I saw him in it this morning and I thought, yeah, there's something in that. He *is* a little miracle. He's our miracle. I am his and he is mine. My baby, my boy, my Billy.

This is an edited extract from Rachel's book *Advice From Strangers: Everything I Know From People I Don't Know*, which will be published on 17 March (Hodder, £18.99). To order a copy for £16.14 until 27 March, go to mailshop.co.uk/books or call 020 3176 2937*

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: KARLA GOWLETT. HAIR AND MAKE-UP: KATIE KING.
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THE TROUBLED LIFE OF HOLLYWOOD'S ORIGINAL FEMME FATALE

Three stormy marriages, heartbreak, ill health: AVA GARDNER was famed as much for her off-screen antics as her film roles. Now *Downton* star *Elizabeth McGovern* is bringing her tale to the stage

To be perfectly honest, I had only a vague idea of who Ava Gardner was when, about eight years ago, I chanced upon a book gathering dust on a bookshelf in my house. It was called *Ava Gardner: The Secret Conversations*. On its cover was a picture of a woman sprawled on a settee in a black bustier, diamond earrings, fishnet stockings and little else (see right). She appeared to be 'resting', with one long and graceful bare arm thrown akimbo (as you do). She was stunning.

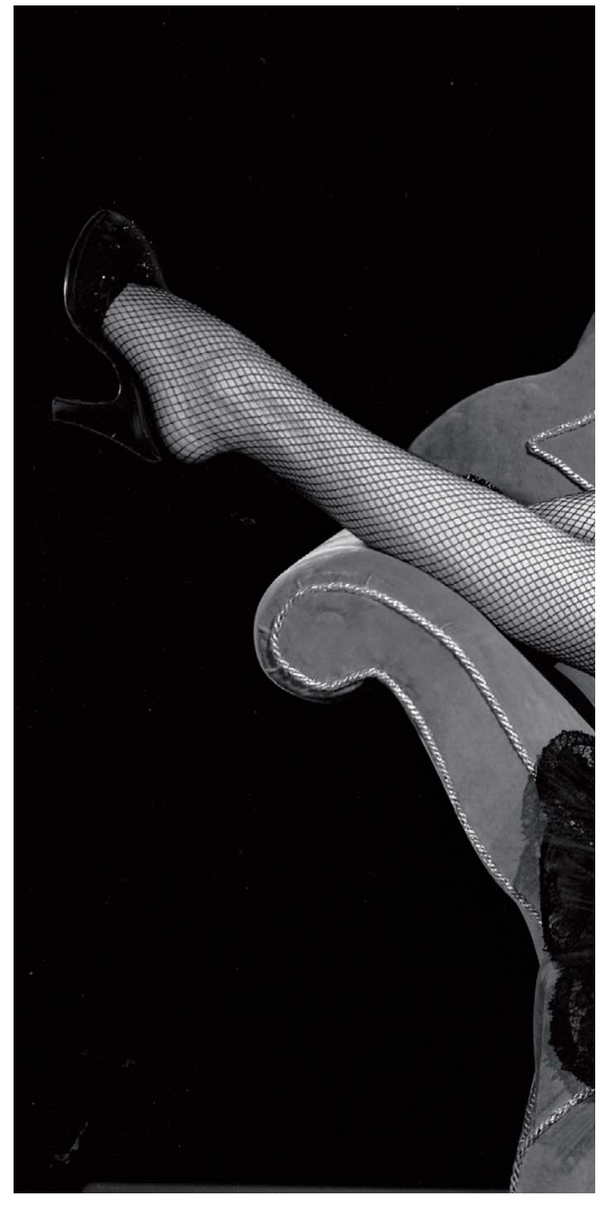
In the 1940s and 50s, Ava was one of Hollywood's brightest stars. She was a farmer's daughter who hadn't given acting a thought when she was spotted by a movie scout at the age of 18. She was no overnight success; it took four years of background roles for Ava to get her big break. In 1946, MGM loaned her to rival studio Universal to appear in *The Killers*. Playing a seductress opposite Burt Lancaster, also in a breakout role, she caught the eye of studio bosses and bigger roles began to come her way. *The Hucksters*, *One Touch of Venus*, *Show Boat* and *Mogambo*, for which she received her only Oscar nomination, all followed in an incredible career that lasted decades.

In the final years of her life, a journalist named Peter Evans was hired by Ava to ghostwrite her autobiography. At the time, she was living in London, her glory days behind her, counting out the time following a debilitating stroke and very much looking forward to her final curtain (she died in London in 1990, aged 67).

The Secret Conversations is not a biography. It is a transcript of the year Evans spent in Ava's company, attempting to write a biography and, ultimately, failing. They were in her flat or on the phone all hours of the day and night, talking and developing what can only be described as an intimacy not unlike that of an exciting (and exhausting) illicit love affair.

For me, the book was gold dust. I knew I wanted to play Ava in that period of her life. It cried out to be a play about two lives that intersect at exactly the right time for them both as their mutual needs collide. And, by lifting the dialogue straight from the unretouched transcript, you've got a glorious character to start with: witty, foul-mouthed, humble, eloquent, compassionate, aggravating and lovable all at the same time.

For Ava, the need was to come to terms with her past – a hard-drinking and partying lifestyle that took her through three turbulent marriages. The first, to Mickey Rooney, was doomed to failure when even his mother warned Ava that he was a womaniser. 'He went through the ladies like a hot knife through fudge,' she once remarked. The irony of the fact that one of Hollywood's greatest sex symbols was a virgin on her wedding



From top: the image that wowed Elizabeth and Ava with husband Frank Sinatra in 1951

From top: Elizabeth playing Ava in *The Secret Conversations* and Ava at 61 with her corgi Morgan, 1984

BETTMAN ARCHIVE, STEPHEN CHUNG/ALAMY, VIRGIL APGER/JOHN KOBAL FOUNDATION/GETTY IMAGES

night was not lost on Ava. 'I caught on very quickly,' she said.

Band leader Artie Shaw, Ava's second husband, was domineering and controlling: 'another kind of bully; he was always putting me down'. Today we'd probably call it 'coercive control' and Ava's mental health was certainly undermined by him – at one point she felt so intellectually insecure around her new husband that she took an IQ test. 'He had me convinced that I was completely stupid,' she said. 'I didn't have an enormous IQ, but I did have a high one.'

Her third, and most famous, marriage was to Frank Sinatra and although characterised by deep affection it was also punctuated by drunken rows and dramatic public spats. The gossip columnists of the day loved Ava and Frank as much for their personal dramas as for their art. Ava had two abortions while she was with Frank, according to her memoirs. They married in 1951 and divorced six years later, but remained close for the rest of their lives.

Evans, meanwhile, needed to inhabit a world larger than his own. The writer couldn't believe his luck when he was presented with the opportunity to chart the reflections of the ultimate Hollywood femme fatale. Within the four walls of Ava's London flat, something magical happened.

The relationship between a ghost biographer and their subject also throws up so much to explore. Who is exploiting who, and to what end? Who gets to control the story? In my stage adaptation of the book, I'm very lucky to have a brilliant actor, Anatol Yusef, playing Evans. He also steps into the roles of other characters from Ava's life. Along the way, we meet Frank Sinatra, Mickey Rooney, Howard Hughes and others who peopled the glorious, crooked, misogynistic, electrifying and beautiful era which was the Hollywood studio system of the 40s and 50s.

'SHE WAS WITTY, FOUL-MOUTHED, HUMBLE AND LOVABLE ALL AT THE SAME TIME'

Ava was a woman ahead of her time, a feminist without ever claiming the word. She lived life on her own terms, took her knocks and kept on keeping on. She was a natural progressive, not by being political, intellectual or even well educated, but by being authentic. She embraced all races, all sexual orientations. She embraced other women. She suffered the foolishness of the powerful alpha males who dominated her world, but could see complexity, could see their side of things and could forgive them. She could even love them to the end.

The legacy of Ava's life makes me what I am and, in turn, my daughters. We inherit the experience of all the women who go before us. It's important to look at their lives. Ava was a woman who refused to fit neatly into the social norms of the world she was born into. 'I made movies, I made out, I made a mess of my life. But I never made jam,' she famously said of her failure to find domestic bliss.

That's Ava. She took the first step on the road we are now travelling. It may have been thrust upon her, but she rolled with the punches.

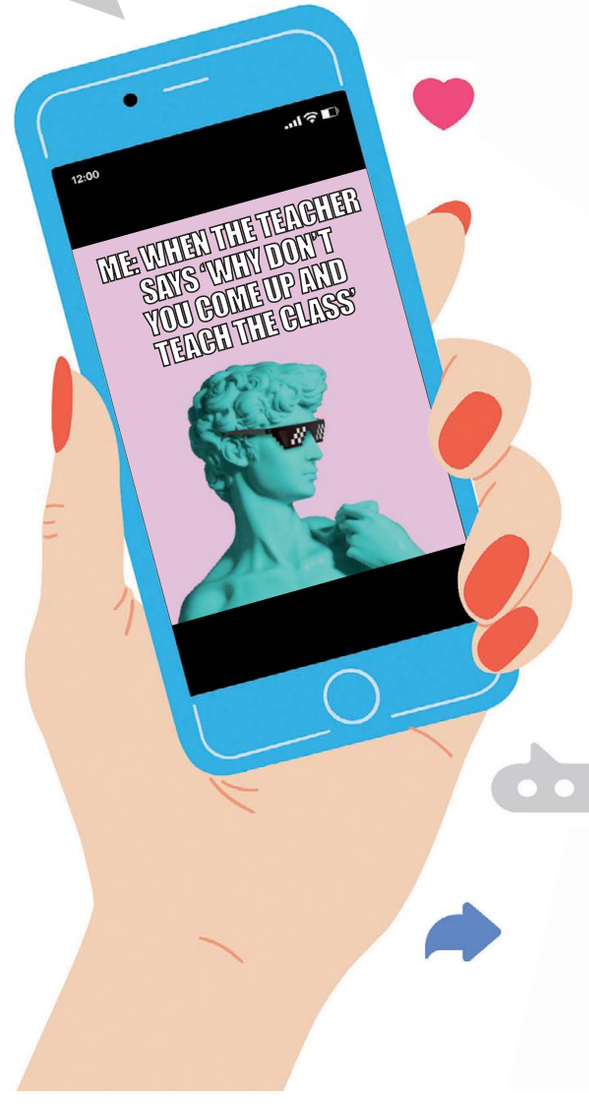
Come and see us tell her story!

***Ava: The Secret Conversations* is at London's Riverside Studios theatre until 16 April**

How playground gossip went viral

Forget bitching behind the bike sheds. Today's teens are making snide comments online – and even targeting teachers. But when does banter become dangerous bullying? *Tanith Carey* investigates

ILLUSTRATIONS: SOFIA AYUSO



The memes pictured here are typical of the ones posted on the school gossip accounts

At first, mum-of-three Jo Bailey, 43, was amused when she heard from other parents about an Instagram account which mocked the strict rules at her 14-year-old son Jamie's Midlands comprehensive. Initially, the images – making fun of the school dinners, teachers' pet sayings and strict rules about how to queue in the lunch hall – didn't surprise her. 'These days, children think they can say what they like online. They feel untouchable,' Jo says.

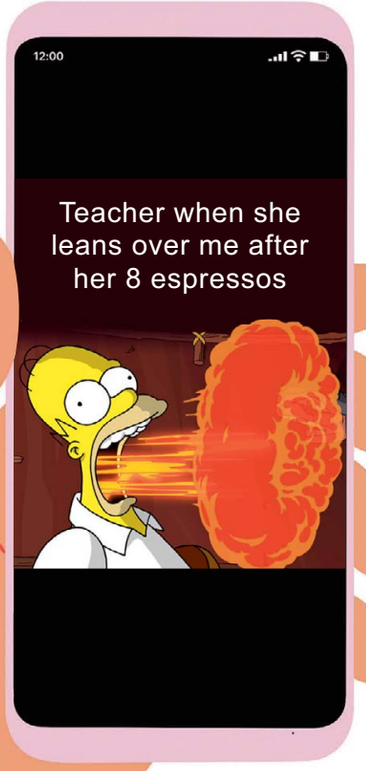
But then, as she scrolled through other social-media-platform pages linked to the school, she came across a worrying account. The creator, apparently a younger child acting alone, clearly harboured serious grudges against several staff members. The posts included messages such as, 'I hope the school gets bombed', and it named teachers who →

12:00
Me: When the teacher says 'let's have some new hands'

12:00
MY LOOMING GCSEs

12:00
THE OFSTED REP IN THE BACK OF YOUR CLASSROOM

12:00
Me: trying to explain that going to the loo during a lesson is a human right



they said should get 'stabbed', 'raped' or 'tortured'.

'I was shocked,' recalls Jo. 'There was even a poll asking if other pupils agreed, though the results weren't published. It had been up for a few weeks.' Because these online comments didn't have a large number of views and hadn't been reported by the school, nothing was done about the content and, at the time of writing, they were still visible to anyone knowing where to search.

Of course, pupils have always let off steam about school. But for Gen Z – for whom social media is second nature – venting isn't limited to gossiping with their peers behind the bike sheds. Now, their thoughts have the potential to go viral.

Welcome to the world of secondary school gossip accounts on Instagram, Facebook and TikTok. Also known as 'spilling the tea' and 'shade accounts', mostly they feature memes – humorous images or clips overlaid with jokes and captions, designed to make fun of school life, teachers and rules.

Though often dressed up as a harmless laugh, some veer into dangerous territory. These include memes calling staff 'paedos', accusing them of ignoring bullying or of misappropriating school funds.

Memes can also turn misogynistic with boys referring to girls as 'thots', a new term for slut. Some pages feature anonymous confessions about school liaisons, often sexual, leading commentators to speculate on the identities. There are also tales of in-school drug taking. It seems such pages have come to prominence in recent times as young people revel in the novelty of being back together after months of remote learning. Gossip accounts are usually run by one or two rebellious, older students who pride themselves on having the most biting sense of humour. And for slickly run private schools, such pages have also become a weapon for students to punch holes in brochure-friendly images.

After attending two impressive open days, Suzanne Cooper was convinced she had found the perfect boarding school for her 14-year-old son Ben. The glossy prospectus promised that the school, with its desirable location in the South of England, could offer her son not just a top-drawer education but also turn him into a creative, enquiring and well-rounded young person.

But once term had started, Suzanne stumbled upon another side to the school when she tried to google the half-term pick-up arrangements. This time, it was written by the pupils.

POSTS NAMED TEACHERS, AND ONE MESSAGE SAID: 'I HOPE THE SCHOOL GETS BOMBED'

'It was an Instagram account, also under the school's name, where some students had posted memes about how bored and unmotivated they were, how they'd evaded the teachers' attempts to catch them taking drugs and how they'd shown up to assembly still drunk from the night before,' says Suzanne, 54, from Hertfordshire.

'At first, I'd hoped it was an exaggeration by some of the older pupils but now Ben has been there a couple of years, it feels worryingly accurate. The more I got to know the school, the more I realised that it does have a drug problem – so much so that at one point the head sent in sniffer dogs.

'I gather the school knows about the page, though not who's behind it. But they can't get it removed because it doesn't name anyone specifically and it's not extreme enough to break any rules.

'Ben thinks it's hilarious and everyone at the school follows it. But I think it normalises drug-taking and disrespect towards staff, as well as making the school look terrible.'

The first Sandra Joseph knew about the meme account at her 16-year-old daughter Flo's girls' school was when she got a letter from the head just before the first lockdown. 'It was sent out to all the parents and asked us to check our daughters' phones for signs they'd been looking at the Instagram page or posting anything on it,' recalls Sandra, 54, a designer who lives in West London.

'As the account in question was on a public setting, it could be seen by anyone. I had a look for myself and there were the usual jokes about school meals. It did mention teachers a lot, but in a mocking rather than brutal way.

'My first feeling was relief that the girls weren't targeting each other – but I could see why some of the staff might be upset. There were unflattering pictures and comments making fun of them. Things like how the chemistry teacher would explode if pupils didn't wear their goggles, how the maths teacher could never stick to the point and how you had to be half dead to see the nurse. To be honest, I thought some were quite funny, though I didn't say that to Flo.'

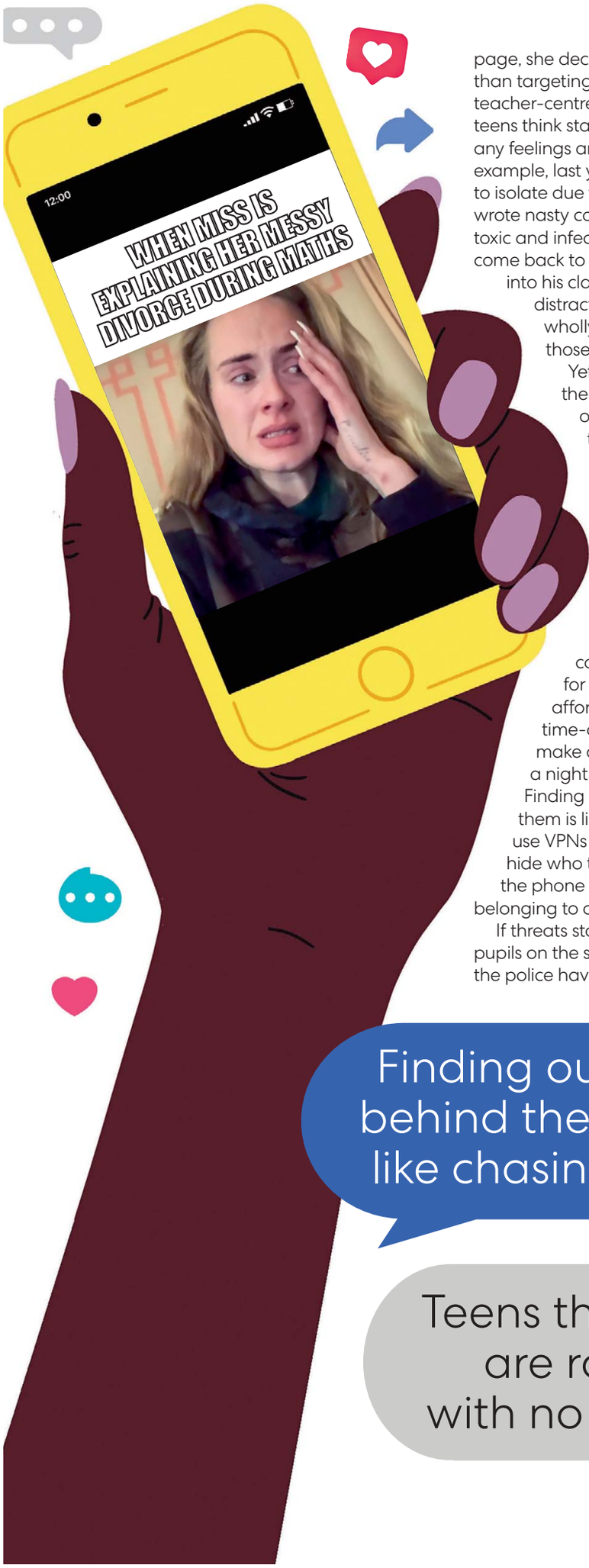
For Sandra, the incident sums up the mixed messages for teenagers these days. 'On one hand, the girls are encouraged to speak up for themselves, be creative and have an opinion. But when they do, they are in trouble.

'However, I imagine it's very difficult if you're a teacher who gets singled out and you have to teach classes, not knowing which pupils are making fun of you. We laughed at the staff, too, when we were their age, but they never knew about it. We'd draw caricatures in our rough books but only your friends saw them. Now the mockery is seen by everyone, including parents of prospective pupils.

'Flo's school is high-achieving, meaning the head is fiercely protective of its reputation. I can see why they got a bit heavy-handed but the identities of the girls behind it were never found out and they stopped posting.'

While pupils might claim it's only a bit of fun, being targeted can be deeply traumatic for teachers, says Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers. He speaks of the 'huge distress' that can be caused and goes as far as to say that it can 'lead those affected to consider leaving the profession'.

Lexi Kerr, 27, a teacher at a sixth-form centre in the East of England, has seen the disruption such meme pages can cause. After overhearing some of the Year 12 students talking about a college gossip



page, she decided to investigate. 'Rather than targeting other pupils, it was teacher-centred,' she says. 'At this age, teens think staff are robots who don't have any feelings and that we deserve it. For example, last year one of the teachers had to isolate due to Covid and some students wrote nasty comments about how he was toxic and infected. When he was able to come back to college, some refused to go into his classroom. These pages can be a distraction for young people but a wholly negative experience for those who appear in them.'

Yet beyond that, Lexi also sees the school gossip page as opening up an opportunity to talk to teenagers about appropriate online behaviour. 'I think students need to be educated about the possible negative effects on the mental health of the people they mention.'

Leon Hady of Guide Education – which provides teacher training – says such content poses a huge challenge for school leaders and they can't afford to ignore it. 'These pages are time-consuming to deal with and make a difficult job harder. They are a nightmare for teachers to police. Finding out which pupils are behind them is like chasing ghosts. Kids may use VPNs [virtual private networks] to hide who they are. They could be using the phone of another pupil or even one belonging to an adult.'

If threats start to be exchanged between pupils on the social-media pages, Leon says the police have to be called in order to prevent the possibility of violence breaking out away from school.

However, provided they don't encourage abusive or criminal behaviour, such pages can actually have a positive effect, says clinical psychologist Emma Citron. 'These forums give pupils a sense of control in a place where they spend a large part of their lives, yet feel they have little say. Gossip generally serves the purpose of social cohesion and the sharing of common opinions, which increases social bonding.'

When faced with inappropriate or offensive online gossip, Andy Phippen, professor of digital rights at Bournemouth University, advises that there may be little the police can do. 'The truth is that, if you put a microphone around the lunch hall to pick up what pupils say, you'd hear far worse. When it comes to the pages, it requires a conversation with the students and the pages to be reported to the platform upon which it was posted.'

If, however, a pupil is making a specific allegation about criminal behaviour then it may become a police matter. 'When senior leadership in school is challenged, often the first response is to shut down criticism and protect the school's reputation rather than investigate whether students have a point.

'You only have to look at why Everyone's Invited [the forum established by young people in 2020 to expose rape culture in schools, which now has thousands of testimonies] was set up. Pupils felt their experiences of sexual assault and rape were not being taken seriously – no one could accuse Everyone's Invited of being a gossip page.'

Looking back, Suzanne says discovering her son's school meme page makes her wish she hadn't fallen quite so hard for the prospectus photos of eager-beaver pupils in the school library. Particularly given the £32,000-a-year fees.

She is, however, in a tricky position because only a handful of schools offer the type of specialist tuition that Ben is receiving. 'I have left him there for now because he's happy and the teaching works for him. But it's certainly made me nervous and worried about the running of the school and what Ben could be getting up to there in the future.

'If I'd seen then how some of the pupils view the school from the inside, I would have certainly asked some more searching questions.'

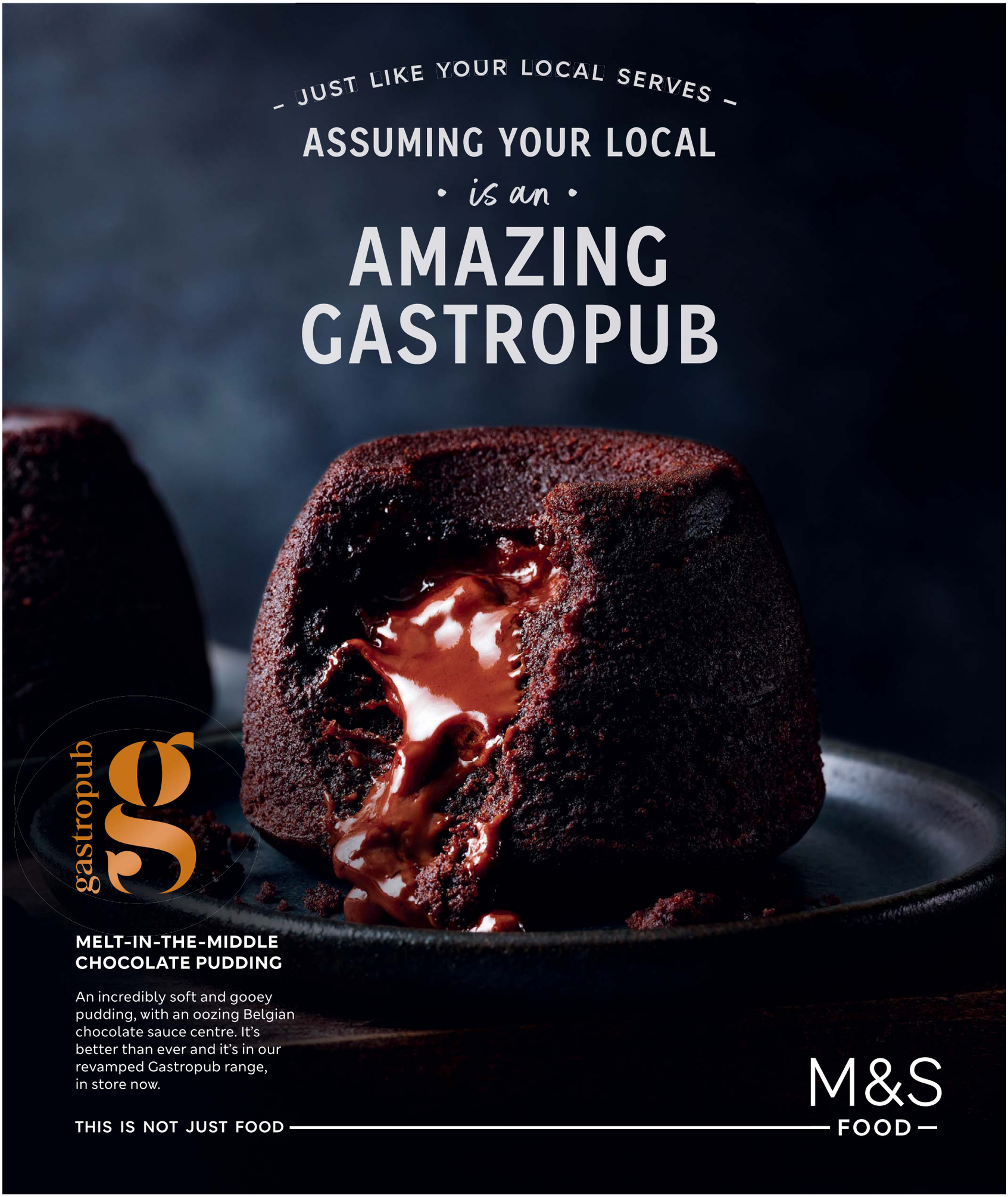
Finding out who is behind these sites is like chasing ghosts

Teens think staff are robots with no feelings

Tanith Carey is the author of *What's My Teenager Thinking? Practical Child Psychology For Modern Parents* with Dr Angharad Rudkin, published by DK, price £16.99*

LEMONADE ILLUSTRATION AGENCY. NAMES OF PUPILS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE BEEN CHANGED. *TO ORDER A COPY FOR £14.44 UNTIL 27 MARCH, GO TO MAILSHOP.CO.UK/BOOKS OR CALL 020 3176 2937. FREE UK DELIVERY ON ORDERS OVER £20

Serving suggestions shown. Selected stores only – subject to availability. © Marks and Spencer plc.



ROSIE GREEN

LOVE, SEX AND DATING

Is jealousy a good thing? Discuss

'So who, exactly, is Sensai?' This was the text my friend Carrie received from her husband during our girls' night out, followed by a picture of a big bunch of red roses sitting atop their kitchen island. Carrie smiled, then returned her attention to our table. Leaving him to stew on whether Sensai was a hot yoga teacher, or perhaps the guy who made her almond milk latte every morning. The one who always gave her extra froth.

After a few hours, she let him know that Sensai is, in fact, a beauty brand that had sent her a bouquet because she is an influential make-up artist. He feigned nonchalance, but Carrie knew her husband had felt a twinge of jealousy and she liked it. She was pleased he'd been tapped on the shoulder by the old green-eyed monster because it proved he cared.

Jealousy has existed as long as love has. I can't imagine that anyone with a pulse can 100 per cent rise above it. I'm certainly not immune to flashes of it. Luckily there have been limited jealousy trigger points in my new relationship thanks to most of it occurring during the pandemic. Covid has kiboshed the office parties, stag dos and even his visits to the gym with the very 'helpful' and preternaturally nubile trainers.

I will confess to having a twitch last week when he sent me a card from Moonpig that came addressed to Amelia (alarm bells). But the emotion subsided when I told him and seconds later he sent through a screen shot of the ordering page which showed Amelia as their stock name (he was then supposed to personalise it). So I concluded that she probably wasn't another girlfriend. When I examined my feelings, I realised that jealousy comes because you perceive a threat to your relationship. And for those of us prone to catastrophising (hands up) you then immediately start to anticipate its dramatic demise. This can make you worried, self-doubting, insecure and withdrawn. Or, put another way, make your head spin out of control as per *The Exorcist*.

Research says that this response can be dialled up if you've had a parent leave in childhood or an unfaithful partner. Despite experience of both those things, I think I have a good grip on jealousy. There are pangs when my boyfriend salivates over Scarlett Johansson, but most of the time I'm confident in what I bring to the table (mainly Kettle Chips and wine).

My ex-husband was not very jealous. I always thought it might be nice if he was a bit more so. That would show his strength of feeling. Had he been tormented by jealousy I'd have been able to bask in my desirability as he fought off any potential suitors.

But I quickly realised, when I had a boyfriend who was seriously jealous in nature, that it was actually a gigantic pain in the derrière. He'd square up to men he thought were giving me the eye, question the motives of male work colleagues and see danger everywhere. It was through this experience I learned that jealousy is not about the strength of a partner's love for you, but more about their own sense of insecurity.

But can jealousy ever be good? I think it can, in moderation. It can fan the flames of desire and make you appreciate what you have. See that woman fluttering her lashes at your partner? It can remind you of your loved one's value to you. Which, in turn, means you up your game and invest more in your relationship. Ditto when they realise that someone finds you attractive – it reminds a partner of your worth to them.

A friend of mine took to ordering herself flowers 'from an admirer' every time she thought her boyfriend was taking her for granted. Did it work? Every. Single. Time.

@lifesrosie

I CONFESS TO A TWITCH WHEN HE SENT ME A CARD ADDRESSED TO AMELIA

DAVID VENNI; STYLING: NICOLA ROSE. MAKE-UP: CAROLINE BARNES AT FRANK AGENCY. HAIR: ALEX SZABO AT CAROL HAYES MANAGEMENT

SUSANNAH TAYLOR

OUR AWARD-WINNING HEALTH AND WELLBEING EXPERT

Virtual exercise, *real* sweat

I've just done aerobics by moonlight on an Ibizan rooftop with a gorgeous man with huge biceps and very tight leggings. Last week I played table tennis in a James Bond-style chalet in the mountains. I've even been hanging out with Lady Gaga in what felt like a set from *The Hunger Games*.

How did I get so lucky? Because they aren't actually real – they exist in my Oculus Meta Quest 2 headset (from £299, oculus.com), which I've been trialling. Never heard of an Oculus? It's a virtual reality (VR) contraption that looks a bit like sci-fi goggles and, when you put it on, transports you into a 360-degree fantasy world that feels so real, it's as if you are actually in it. When I put on the headset today I found myself in South America, standing by a beautiful holiday house, with birds flying across the blue skies above and rush matting under my feet. It was so convincing I could almost smell the sun cream.

SUSANNAH BEING PUT THROUGH HER VIRTUAL PACES

VR headsets first started as an immersive gaming experience, but are now a huge trend in the world of fitness, where you can box with a virtual personal trainer, learn street dance, meditate and join classes with others. I'll be honest, as someone who writes about the benefits of getting out into the fresh air to exercise and has never played a computer game in her life, it's not something that's ever appealed. Besides, isn't it all a bit 'young' for a 46-year-old? But then I tried it. First up, it's impossible not to be wowed by the hyper-real graphics that move as you do. When I play table tennis against a cyber opponent, it's a genuinely skilled game.

One of the most popular apps to download once you've got the headset is FitXR (£7.99 a month, fitxr.com) where you can work out with virtual boxing, cardio or dance trainers. You not only choose the type of exercise you want to do but the location, too.

HOW DOES A VIRTUAL CLASS COMPARE TO A GYM? IT'S HARD WORK!

How does it compare to a real-life gym class? It's hard work. I squat and lunge, my heart rate is up, I'm out of breath and I sweat – a lot. And with levels from beginner to advanced, there's a workout for everyone. The only downside, I'd say, is there's no one there to correct your form, which could potentially result in an injury.

Another hugely popular app is Beat Saber (£22.99, beatsaber.com), where you slash the beats of adrenaline-pumping music as they fly towards you. There are many stories on the internet about how it helps mental focus but also encourages weight loss – one fan in particular lost 138lb over a few months. As for me, how did I find hitting coloured boxes flying at my head with a *Star Wars*-style lightsaber while dodging other obstacles? I loved it! And that's the best thing about VR, you get to do things you can't do in real life – it's like being in an action movie.

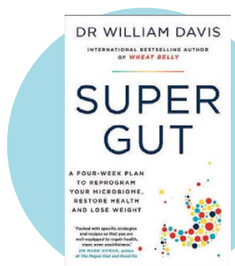
If this all sounds terrifyingly futuristic, it is. However, the gamification of exercise is growing fast – last month saw the launch of Lanebreak, home-exercise brand Peloton's virtual cycling track that challenges you to pedal harder and faster to up your fitness. With its celebrity instructors and brilliant music, Peloton has managed to make fitness not just fun, but even help you forget you're exercising.

Would I buy the Oculus for myself? Put it this way – if I 'bought one for the kids' you may just find me, lightsaber in hand, borrowing it while they're at school.

*@susannahtaylor_*

THE GOOD GUT GUIDE

In his new book *Super Gut* (Yellow Kite, £14.99*) cardiologist and bestselling author Dr William Davis explores how processed diets, pesticides and overuse of antibiotics have damaged our microbiome. He includes a four-week plan to reset our gut, up good bacteria and eliminate the bad, while rebooting our emotional health, promoting anti-ageing and encouraging weight loss and better sleep.



A GREENER CLEANER

According to research, harsh cleaning chemicals are not beneficial for lung health. They also end up down the drain and in our rivers, which is why I have been loving using Purdy & Figg's Eco-Concentrate surface cleaner starter kit. For £15 (purdyandfigg.com), it includes a reusable glass spray bottle and one shot of Eco-Concentrate (which is available in three essential-oil scents). To use, you just add the concentrate to the bottle and top up with tap water.

*TO ORDER A COPY FOR £12.74 UNTIL 27 MARCH GO TO MAILSHOP.CO.UK/BOOKS OR CALL 020 3176 2937. FREE UK DELIVERY ON ORDERS OVER £20

CAROLINE WEST-MEADS

OUR RELATIONSHIPS COUNSELLOR ANSWERS YOUR PROBLEMS

Nothing I do is good enough for her

Q My partner has suffered from depression for decades, but has only seen the doctor once – and stopped taking the prescribed medication after a few years. She will not talk to anyone or seek help professionally or from family, not even me. Covid has had a major impact on her mental health and, to be honest, her behaviour is now affecting mine. In the past I've been told I'm very positive and happy – I'm certainly not that now. I don't want to go on medication myself and I'm stuck. It's as though nothing I do is good enough for her. I try hard to get things right, but I'm not perfect – far from it. I'm always being told negative things or talked to as if I'm stupid, and when I respond I'm accused of being horrid or aggressive. This is not in my nature, but sometimes I have to defend myself. I'm criticised if I mention her behaviour and then made to feel guilty. People have commented on the way that I'm spoken to. Years ago our son asked why she was so foul to me. I really didn't know how to respond. She doesn't have any close friends or hobbies and seems to resent me doing things. I would like to change the dynamic, but after so many years it's unlikely. How can it get better?

A I'm so sorry to hear this. It is a very difficult situation and one you have clearly been putting up with for years. When you ask 'How can it get better?' I can't help wondering if you have had enough and want to leave. You are obviously very unhappy. To a certain extent, you can change the dynamic by refusing to put up with your partner's bad behaviour. Unknowingly, you've allowed her to set up a pattern in which she makes you responsible for her happiness. You constantly walk on eggshells and are afraid of another outburst – or of making her mental health worse. You say you try hard to get things right. Does she show the same consideration to you? Expecting perfection is unreasonable. So when she behaves badly and accuses you of being aggressive or horrid, make a stand. Leave the room if she is rude or shouts; say that you will talk when she is calmer. You could also tell her – gently but firmly – that unless she seeks help for her mental health and agrees to couples counselling, you may have to consider whether you can stay in the relationship. Explain that her behaviour is affecting your wellbeing and that you owe yourself a duty of care. She needs to accept more responsibility for her own mental health. In the current situation there is no incentive for her to change. Of course, such an ultimatum is daunting and you may worry how she will cope if you leave, but your happiness matters too. It is not enough to stay with someone because you feel sorry for them or you feel you must repeatedly fix them. So urge her to see her GP and seek counselling for yourself to help you prioritise your own needs – try bacp.co.uk or relate.org.uk.

> I'm always being told negative things or talked to as if I'm stupid

MY DAUGHTER WON'T ACCEPT MY NEW MAN

Q My husband died six years ago, leaving the family business to me and my three children. My youngest daughter sold her share to her brother and sister, who now manage the company between them. They (and their spouses) sometimes argue about the business, but mostly it's fine. However, three years ago I met a lovely new man and we are really happy together, but my elder daughter won't accept him. I have tried to encourage them to get on but she is cold and distant towards him. I feel like giving up. It's affecting my relationship with my adult grandchildren and son-in-law too.

A However nice a step-parent is, children (even as adults) can find it hard to accept them. But it is worth considering where the conflict comes from. You say there are sometimes tensions between your two children and their partners in managing the business, but you don't say if you have any remaining interest in the company. Maybe your daughter fears your new partner might interfere in its working either directly or indirectly through you. Or perhaps she is jealous of his role in your life. Maybe her sadness at losing her father means she would resent anyone who, in her eyes, might be taking his place. So ask her if there is any reason why she doesn't like him and make sure you listen without springing straight to his defence. Explain that you love her and that you don't want this conflict to spoil your special bond. However, emphasise that you love him, too, and that it makes you sad that she won't give him a fair chance. She can't really want you to be lonely if you have another chance at happiness.

OUR THOUGHTS EXACTLY

Seen something that makes you smile?
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If you have a problem, write to Caroline West-Meads at: YOU, Northcliffe House, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TS, or email c.west-meads@mailonsunday.co.uk. Caroline reads all your letters but regrets she cannot answer each one personally

MOLLIE MANNING, GETTY IMAGES

HOW TO GET A

Unsure about buying and displaying artwork? Interiors stylist *Joanna Thornhill* shares her tips for curating

RT SMART

g your own collection

EMMAJANEPALIN.COM

Blank walls can feel daunting – but so can the pressure of working out what to fill them with. Here are the key elements to consider when building your own art collection...

First up, get clear on your objectives: yes, you want to fill your walls with stuff you like the look of, but also consider how you'd like your art to make you feel. If you're after a calming vibe, then designs with similar tones to your room will bring less visual distraction. If you want to create a scene-stealing focal point, something with an element of contrast is a better bet. Maybe you'd like to spark happy memories by commissioning a portrait of a loved one or select pieces that represent (either literally or as an abstract nod) a favourite place.

Next, shop savvy, or get commissioning-clever: although art buying can be accessible for any budget, the trick is to think outside the box if your funds are limited. Postcards and ephemera can be collected for peanuts and given gravitas by popping them into a frame from a charity shop.

Limited-edition prints are usually much cheaper than originals, yet still have an element of exclusivity.

Choosing canvases rather than unframed prints avoids the additional costs of framing. Art fairs and auctions can be →

◀ THE FRAME GAME

If you're concerned about creating something that looks chaotic, stick to the same style and colour of frames throughout your gallery wall (or consider painting existing mismatched frames the same colour to 'cheat' them into uniformity). Fill any awkward gaps with a few unframed postcards and polaroids to give an air of informality.

a great way of discovering more affordable, up-and-coming artists, so keep an eye out for any events in your area to make connections with local artists.

If you're looking to invest in a bespoke piece but are budget-conscious, contemporary artist Emma Tweedie (emmatweedie.art) advises providing your chosen artist with a written brief and images of the room the artwork will be displayed in. Ensure sizing, medium and materials are agreed in advance, so you get an accurate quote.

Lastly, curate your display: whether you're going for a gallery wall or a single statement piece, aim to hang your selections so the centre of each artwork is roughly level with your eyeline. For a gallery wall, apply this rule to your central piece, then work outwards from there (if in doubt, arrange everything on the floor until you're happy with your configuration before committing to walls). Symmetrical arrangements will create a sense of order, though for more visual friction, asymmetric will give the eye somewhere to travel.

Above all, the most important thing is to create a display that you love and which brings you pleasure. If in doubt, take the approach of fashion and interior designer Matthew Williamson: 'Your walls should resemble a mosaic of your life – a patchwork of images that describe your essence.'

◀ BOLD MOVES

Feeling brave? Get playful with your layouts: try hanging a statement artwork off-centre, or pairing two wildly different sized pieces together for a whimsical look. Here, black accents (on the small frame, in the larger artwork and as a trim in the console) have been used to ground the scheme.

SURPRISE TOUCHES ▶

Try not to limit your 'art' to just framed prints or painted canvases: think outside the box and create a more stimulating scheme by incorporating some 3D objects or decorative plates to help break up any blockiness.

RACHAEL SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY. ARTWORK: NOLA CAMPBELL. DESIGNED BY KITESGROVE

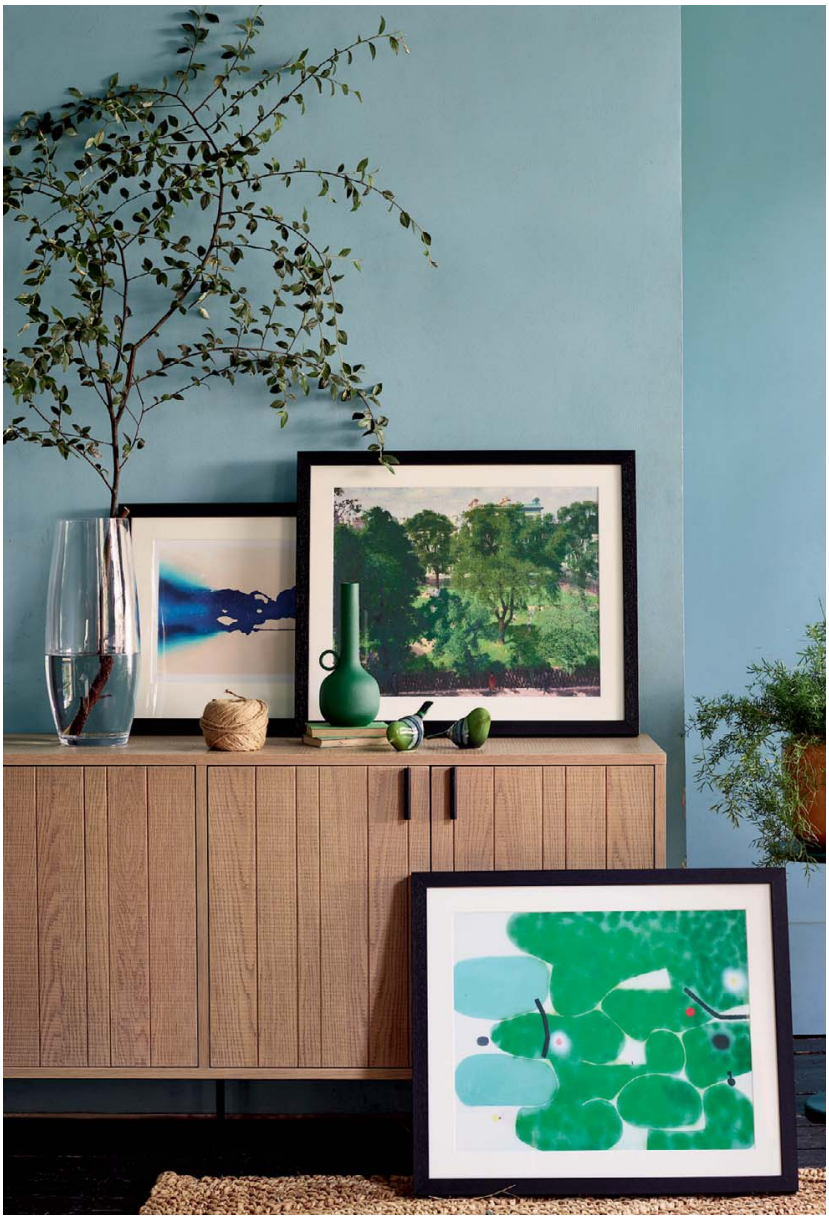
THINGS I LIKE
HAPPY
CHLORODYNE LOZ.
TINTURA DE IPECACUANA
VINO DE CONDURANGO
BELLA FREUD
THANK YOU
RHEI.R.
PRUN.CLOB
PUM.LAP.P.
MARANT.N.
R.GENTIAN.
POT.BICHR.

IMAGE RESEARCH: CHARLOTTE PAGE. LEFT: VEERLE EVENS

▼ EXTRA STYLE POINTS

Wall colours and decorative touches can really support and enhance an art curation: here, nature-inspired artworks are complemented by greens and blues, a wooden console, woven mat and foliage.

Below: *Stromboli* framed print (far left), £115, and *The Green Earth* framed print (on floor), £135, both by Victor Pasmore; *Carlyle Square, Chelsea* framed print, £125, by Robert Buhler, all Tate x johnlewis.com



◀ HANG OR HOOK?

If you're renting, or conscious of putting too many holes in your walls, consider installing a picture ledge instead, which requires just a few screws and can hold an ever-evolving collection of multiple prints. Alternatively, opt for removable picture hooks from command.3M.co.uk, which can be taken off without damaging walls.

Opposite: *Heavy and Awkward* framed screenprint, £275, by Alex Edwards; *Blue Drift* print, £150, by Natascha Madeiski; *Stretch Out and Wait* print, £65, by Alex Booker; ceramics, from a selection, all artistsandobjects.com

WALLPAPER WOW ▶

Art can absolutely work against a wallpapered background, but to avoid it being overwhelming or competing with your pictures stick to a simpler pattern or design (or place a minimalist artwork against a busier background).

WHERE TO START WITH ART

CONSIDER RENTING

Not ready to commit to buying a piece of art? Then hire it at gertrude.com. This monthly subscription service has a diverse and exciting range of original artworks that you can rent for a fixed fee of £50 per month.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

The female-founded website murus.art has a View on Your Wall function which, via your smartphone or tablet, allows you to see how any of the contemporary artworks sold under its label will look in your home.

GET INSIDER HELP

Founder of theartbuyer.co.uk Helen Armon-Jones offers a free consultation service, helping to link prospective buyers with both artworks and artists from her extensive network.

GO VINTAGE

Forget rummaging around charity shops and car-boot sales and instead check out Narchie. This homeware social marketplace app provides a smarter way to seek out second-hand treasures as well as discover upcoming new artists.

LOOK TO EXPERT CURATIONS

John Lewis's new collaboration with East End Prints sees them sharing weekly curated 'themed drops', all available in a selection of sizes and frame finishes.

BAG A BARGAIN

Go to @supersecondsfestival on Instagram to browse its occasional curated weekends of online sample sales from independent artists and makers across the UK.

ENJOY NOW, PAY LATER

The ownart.org.uk scheme allows you to pay for your new masterpiece in instalments and offers interest-free credit on a range of works from a number of galleries signed up to the scheme.

READ McKENDREE/JBSA

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HOROSCOPES & CROSSWORD

YOUR STARS ★ SALLY BROMPTON

PISCES
20 Feb-20 March With the Sun linked to your ruler Neptune, planet of illusion, in your sign, your mind may play tricks on you. No matter how hard-headed a Pisces you think you are, you could be easily misled over the next 24 hours. Check and double check before you act.
CALL 0904 470 1172*

ARIES
21 March-20 April If you are the kind of Aries who chooses to avoid reality you will find it easy to escape into a fantasy world this week. But whatever unpleasantness you temporarily avoid will be waiting for you when you get back so be brave and face up to it now.
CALL 0904 470 1161*

TAURUS
21 April-21 May It's time to pay more attention to friends you have been neglecting. Make space in your busy schedule to touch base with those you haven't seen recently and this time stay in contact. Good friends are hard to find – don't take them for granted.
CALL 0904 470 1162*

GEMINI
22 May-21 June Ensure your ambitions are practical before announcing them to the world. It won't do much for your ego if the only reaction you get is laughter. Some of your ideas have been a bit up in the air lately so perhaps it's time to stop dreaming and start doing.
CALL 0904 470 1163*

CANCER
22 June-23 July Nothing much in your life will alter this week, but improve your attitude and the world will seem a nicer, brighter place. Don't dwell on negative thoughts which have a habit of leading to negative events. You've so much going for you, so be happy.
CALL 0904 470 1164*

LEO
24 July-23 Aug Your first instinct when faced with an impending crisis may be to leave it to others to deal with but if you get your act together you'll find you enjoy being at the centre of the storm. Leos are born to be leaders and this is the time to develop your leadership potential.
CALL 0904 470 1165*

VIRGO
24 Aug-23 Sept With the Sun linked to Neptune in your opposite sign, loved ones are bound to irritate this week. It won't be to annoy you but because their own lives are in such a mess just now. A few words of encouragement from you could make all the difference.
CALL 0904 470 1166*

LIBRA
24 Sept-23 Oct This is a great time to get rid of the junk – emotional, mental and physical – that's cluttering up your life. The Sun in Pisces makes it easy for you to separate what matters from what's just taking up space. Get your life back into shape now, not later.
CALL 0904 470 1167*

SCORPIO
24 Oct-22 Nov The Sun at its most dynamic boosts your confidence but deep down you have nagging doubts that when it comes to the crunch you might not have what it takes. The only way to find out is to put yourself in challenging situations. Do so now.
CALL 0904 470 1168*

SAGITTARIUS
23 Nov-21 Dec This is not a time to have doubts or hesitate as the moment you lose momentum you won't be able to move events in the direction you want. On the home front, too, you must be decisive, not just for yourself but for those who rely on you to lead the way.
CALL 0904 470 1169*

CAPRICORN
22 Dec-20 Jan Neptune's influence can make you indecisive but that may be no bad thing as not everyone has your best interests at heart: you can't be sure if their advice is good for you or for them. Your best move is to make no move and see how things develop.
CALL 0904 470 1170*

AQUARIUS
21 Jan-19 Feb If you mislead others, or yourself, about your financial situation you'll regret it. This is no time for white lies or wishful thinking, but for seeing things as they are and acting swiftly and decisively. Keep track of your spending, too: don't let others buy things for you.
CALL 0904 470 1171*

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LIBRA 0904 470 1127*
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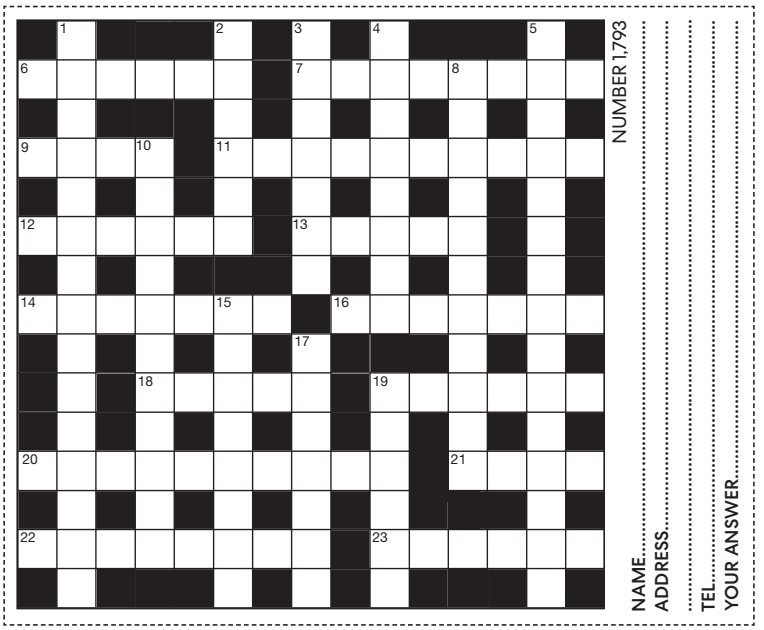

ACROSS
6 Capital of Albania (6)
7 5 down is this – very much so (8)
9 Where crops are grown and animals reared (4)
11 Plus or minus (4,2,4)
12 Expels a tenant from a property (6)
13 'Let us ___ while we may, for in heaven it will not be allowed': Mark Twain (5)
14 Miserable (7)
16 Disorder, lawlessness (7)
18 Surname of the actor who played Doc in **5 down** (5)
19 Formally approve (6)
20 Concern for one's own interest (4-6)
21 Responsibility (4)
22 Unrealistic, idealistic, romantic (8)
23 City in Pakistan (6)

DOWN
1 Unfavourable, detrimental (15)
2 The longest river in India (6)
3 The gathering of crops (7)
4 Futuristic car featured in **5 down** (8)
5 1985 film which spawned two sequels and now a musical (4,2,3,6)
8 Simultaneously translated (11)
10 The star of **5 down** (7,1,3)
15 Real estate (8)
17 Improvement, progress in development (7)
19 Enigma (6)

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In which I'm told I need another facelift

I've just spent three days at London Fashion Week after a two-year hiatus. It was weird being back. I felt like a fossil, dug up and turfed, yet again, on to the front line, or at least the front row. Or row three. I didn't recognise any of the faces. They all seemed impossibly young. I only spied a couple of people I recognise from days of old. Even though one of them had once squeezed me into a bodycon dress for a cover shoot, her eyes washed over me, unseeing and unfriendly. All the young people seemed so confident, happy in their own skin with their bare thighs, clumpy Chelsea boots. Not one seemed riddled with self-doubt. Me? Having filed my review, I spent the rest of the day refreshing my inbox, anxious that all was OK. I couldn't even sleep that night, so worried I wouldn't have made the grade (ie, the paper) the next day.

I thought back to the first fashion show I attended. It was 1978, I was still a student, and it was staged by Mulberry, held at the Hard Rock Cafe. It turned my head. I stared up at the models and wanted their lives, their beauty, their clothes. I was only 20, but I didn't think, 'Oh well, at least I'm young.' I just thought I was spotty, stupid, not tall or thin enough. I managed to get the clothes. My first purchase was a grey silk blouson I'd seen on that catwalk, followed by a Mulberry wallet, as I couldn't afford the bag. I managed to get a store card for a boutique called Crocodile on South Molton Street, where I purchased Maud Frizon slingbacks and olive green silk Calvin Klein hotpants.

Attaining the models' beauty was harder. Electrolysis, skin cream made of snail shells, cauterisation of thread veins, semipermanent eyebrows, airbrush tans, veneers, micro dermawhatsit. No one told me the models were born beautiful and that they would soon, with only the odd exception, retire and marry rich men. For me, the years slipped by as I tried to improve myself. All that changed is I'm now battling different wars. No longer a greasy scalp but hair loss. No longer acne but skin so testudinal the young ladies on beauty counters merely ask, 'Are you dry or very dry?' And say, paramedic-fashion, 'Do you want to apply some now?'

I've hammocks each side of my mouth, which is now pointing downwards

Then I had a shock. Yes, another one, after the evening Gracie collapsed and spontaneously emptied her bladder. I'd rushed her to the vet – thank god we're now allowed inside, rather than me having to hop anxiously, like an expectant father, in the car park – and it turned out she had a raised temperature and a possible bladder infection: she's now on a cocktail of drugs. I can't lose Gracie. Not now. Not yet. Not ever.

The second shock was I caught sight of my face unawares. I discover I have two hammocks each side of my mouth, which is now pointing worryingly downwards: who can blame it after the ten years I've had!

So, emerging from the fashion shows, held in empty car parks which 20 years ago I'd have thought edgy but now find cold, I went back to the see the plastic surgeon, Mr Karidis, who performed my facelift and blepharoplasty (eye bag removal) ten years ago. He has aged in the interim, too, though he doesn't appear to give two hoots: he doubtless has a family, a home, a skiing trip booked, whereas I have nothing and no one.

He sat me in front of a mirror. I'm ashamed to say I found this more frightening than being given an MRI scan. 'Your neck and eyes are very good,' he said. 'Oh, thanks!'

Then the bad news. 'Look at the difference now.' He lifted my face from my cheekbones gently with his hands. I looked like Kristin Davis in *And Just Like That*. Do I want to be her, or Sarah Jessica Parker, with her hollow cheeks that signal only disappointment? I tell him to book me in. I want one last shot at happiness. I haven't given up hope, not quite yet.

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